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LEAVES OF PROSE

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LEAVES OF PROSE

BY ANNIE MATHESON
WITH TWO STUDIES
BY MAY SINCLAIR



STEPHEN SWIFT
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TEN JOHN STREET
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LEAVES OF BROOK

THE
LONDON
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WINDSOR



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PUBLISHERS' NOTE

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They further desire to thank Miss May Sinclair for permitting them to append to this volume two

PUBLISHERS' NOTE

essays by her which had originally been intended for *By Divers Paths*,* a companion volume about to be re-issued by the said publishers of *Leaves of Prose*, who further wish to acknowledge the courtesy of the periodicals in which Miss Sinclair's articles first appeared. If in the above acknowledgments there has been any oversight, it is inadvertent and will be much regretted.

* "*By Divers Paths*"—edited by Miss Matheson, who contributes 42 of the essays and poems—contains two fine sonnets by Miss May Sinclair, several charming studies of South African life by Miss Eleanor Tyrrell, poems by Mrs. Maude Egerton King, and essays by Dr. C. H. Herford, Dr. Greville MacDonald, and Mr. C. C. Cotterill.

CHRISTMAS DAY

THERE is no word save One to tell
The secret of this world of pain ;
Its flame of love that conquers hell,
Its anguished loss that yet is gain.

One only Word since time began
May utter what we dumbly feel,
And thro' the infinite in Man
The infinite in God reveal.

He is our Christmas Joy, our Hope,
Our Immortality, our Strength—
The Word of God, for whom we grope
Thro' all the stumbling journey's length.

Oh, when at last unveiled we see
The Face for which till death we long,
Then shall we know that Word to be
Our Life, our Rapture, and our Song !

LONDON IN SPRING

“THE commotion of the spring is in heaven and earth,” wrote John Addington Symonds, “a restlessness like the approach of some great delivering passion”; and what Symonds felt among the snowfields of the High Alps, we, with diversities of manifestation, have been feeling here in London. Full of smoke and din is the great city; defaced, even on the surface of it, with hideous placards, foul breathing-blots of underground railways, squalid ruck-heaps of poverty and ruin; but how possessed with the great poem and pageant of life, how thrilled and penetrated by the pathos of our struggling and baffled humanity, comedy and tragedy jostling one another, yet with barely time to laugh or weep in the incessant contest for bread and standing-room. No artist, though he starve there, can fail to perceive something of the strange and touching fascination of this sombre and alluring city, stained, disfigured, blackened, yet beautiful with a beauty that moves the heart and haunts the mind, and reaches the deep hiding-places of the soul. It has in it some undefinable quality of sweet unexpectedness, some paradoxical charm of old and new commingling, some mystic hint of the eternal and the divine in communion with the human and the sorrowful. There, in the midst of the hurrying, tramping feet of the thousands of eager wayfarers who encircle with their unheeding processions the ever-open church, of

LONDON IN SPRING

St. Paul's, the great dome keeps a heart of silence and of rest in the midst of the noise of noon, and, in the sky of sunset or of sunrise, lends emphasis to the loveliness of the glowing clouds by something nobly human in its unembarrassed outline. There, the pigeons, with their soft yet opal-tinted plumage, fly about the steps of the cathedral, and haunt the ancient Guildhall. There, past the feet of the old Abbey, the shrine of literature and art and a thousand historic memories, past the Houses of Parliament and the Temple Gardens, the ancient river—the river sung by Chaucer and by Milton, and by Shakespeare himself—flows dreamily onward in the midst of all the restless sorrow and sin and hope—flows under its succession of enchanted bridges, consecrated anew by the poets and the novelists of this complex, hurrying century, till it reaches the thronging ships in the docks, where Labour toils unceasingly under its heaviest burdens. There, in the graveyards and the parks and the open spaces, the little children take joy of the flowers that they may not pluck, and the birds make their lovely jargoning, and the grass grows green again.

London is always beautiful, but never, surely, so pathetically beautiful as in spring. And the spring is coming—is coming at last. The "commotion" that precedes her coming has long been making noisy prelude to the coming melodies, like the half-irritating tuning of the instruments in some great orchestra. Sleet and rain we had, and wind and sunshine, after the long frost-bound winter; and many days ago now the fragrance of

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the palm-willows was already on the air, floating in from the railway sidings at Child's Hill and Hendon, where they scatter their sweets as lavishly as in distant country lanes. Soon the travellers between London and Richmond will find themselves speeding through seas of white blossom, in the orchards on which they look from their railway windows. Already, the great commons of Chislehurst and Wimbledon and Wandsworth must be loading their breezes with the delicious scent of growing trees and reawakened turf and tiny flowers hidden in the grass; and in the deeps of Epping Forest the fairy wood-sorrel must be once more carpeting whole acres with its frail bewitching loveliness. The uplands of High Barnet and the great beeches in the Hadley Woods must be stirring with new life and colour, and merry with the song of birds. And here in town the joy goes on apace; already the lilacs are a mist of green leaf, and from my top-floor window at the back of a little thoroughfare among London shops, I look through the bare branches of an ancient mulberry-tree in the garden of my neighbour the haberdasher, and see that the young "forest tree" behind it is aglow with April verdure. The leaves of the sycamore have broken their pink sheaths, and many of the laburnums at Belsize and Hampstead have unfolded their button-like buds in neatly cut leaves. For a full week the almond trees have been out along the Bayswater Road, and the fairest of them all is one which grows within a corner of area-railing, where such a tree might seem impossible. They are mostly

LONDON IN SPRING

wan and pale this year ; but perhaps their lovely sisters on the south side of Kensington Gardens may blush in rosier buds and petals against that pearly blue of sky which is their true background. Nor is it only in Kensington Gardens that this dainty and lustrous blossom clothes the bare black branches with colours of heaven. In the garden of many a suburban street, in many a sordid and smoky corner, by many a forgotten grave in London's vast outlying burial-grounds, the almond tree is blossoming, and He who "is the perfect Poet" is speaking to the hearts He has fashioned. It is in its symbolism like that other earliest blossom of which Browning wrote :

"The blackthorn boughs,
So dark in the bare wood, when glistening
In the sunshine, were white with coming buds,
Like the bright side of a sorrow."

In the lanes where the woodbine leaves are showing the brown bloominess on the backs of their unfolding leaves, where the little green buds of the hawthorn are swelling among the newly opened foliage, and, like a miniature dandelion-clock, the coltsfoot is making patches of white down in the wayside grass, spring breathes a thousand tender memories of the days that are gone. The white violets will soon be budding in their leafy coverts, the celandines already are starring the fields ; but it seems that the gaiety of the celandine and the fragrance of the violet have a sorrow in them, now that death has stolen from us so many of those "dear familiar faces"

LEAVES OF ROSE

that were with us in the meadows and the byways of our vanished youth.

Yet when the springtime comes to us amid the heart-throbs of a great city, where human needs and aspirations are crying to us on every side, then is there new hope in the sunlight, new vitality in the blossom-laden wind, new love in the very whispering of the churchyard grass. That great and ancient river which, through the long frost, lay bound and deadened under huge blocks of ice, while the sea-gulls hovered hungrily above it, is once more bearing its accustomed freight, and flowing more genially eastward under the bridge which George Eliot has made immortal. The sunshine is upon it, the warm, common, life-giving sunshine. The brotherhood of the world is in the air, and every sense is quickened with the joy of a welcome release from the captivity of a long and bitter winter.

“Once more the Heavenly Power
Makes all things new.”

In such a mood we ask no idle sentimental dreaming over the cherished past: our hearts echo Tennyson's song of wages—we demand no other guerdon than “the glory of going on, and still to be.”

SORDELLO AT THE EAST END

BROWNING says of Sordello:

“He felt

An error, an exceeding error melt—
While he was occupied with Mantuan chants,
Behoved him think of men, and take their wants,
Such as he now distinguished every side,
As his own want which might be satisfied,—
And, after that, think of rare qualities
Of his own soul demanding exercise.”

Some such motto might well be written above the hearth of the University Settlements.

This indeed is the idea which Westcott expressed in his own forcible prose when he said: “The question which we must always be striving to answer is, ‘How shall I do my part in this common life in which I share?’ Sooner or later—here or hereafter—when our eyes are opened, I believe that we shall see that all the sorrows and sins, which fill us with grief and almost with despair, touch ourselves nearly, and are indeed parts of our own life for which we in our measure are responsible.”

And it is with a certain pleasant sense of paradox that we note how a poem often derided for its obscurity has for years been teaching, despite the bewilderment of its gorgeous Italian colouring and the complex harmonies which half conceal its concentrated unity of meaning, a doctrine which

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might well be made the text of a popular movement of the day, a movement of which its enemies have said that it is in danger of losing its true outline in the clouds of talk which encircle it.

But as far as the east is from the west is the temperate enthusiasm of the University Settlers from the imitative sentiment of the gossips who discuss it, and who, without any actual expenditure of time, or strength, or money, yet wrap themselves in a vague philanthropic intention.

The paradox, like other paradoxes, is exactly what all but the narrow-minded would desire. That the purpose of such a movement should be in accordance with the teaching of a great poet who through years of popular neglect patiently preached his gospel to the few who would listen, is precisely what a believer would wish and expect.

The author of "Obiter Dicta" assured us that "Faith may be well left alone, for she is, to give her her due, our largest manufacturer of good works, and, whenever her furnaces are blown out, morality suffers."

Happily this commercial island of ours has never been quite without the poets and prophets who rekindle such furnaces and tend them with unconscious passion. Nor is it always those faggot-pilers who are popularly regarded as the briskest workmen who really do the most to keep the flame at a white heat.

Who shall say how many poets of lower rank have been illumined in some crucial moment by the burning truths which now and then flash from Browning's "Sordello"? Who shall say into

SORDELLO AT THE EAST END

how many towns and cities these lesser men have carried the sacred flame which they borrowed from a book the world has not cared to read? It is a story of the temptations, disciplines, failures, through which Sordello, the young Italian versifier, is taught at last, and just too late for this life, to recognise the mission of every true poet as that of a God-inspired friend of the people, a divinely kindled lover of humanity. That it should seem obscure to many English readers is at once accounted for by the fact that it presupposes an intimate knowledge of Italian history. To Browning the typical reader is what the typical school-boy was to Macaulay. He credits him with his own encyclopædic knowledge, his own powerful and emotional intellect, his own faculty for seeing round corners without moving an inch from the central standpoint, his own vivid over-leaping mode of reasoning, at once so elliptical, parenthetical, and cautiously questioned.

That "Sordello" can at moments be musically, convincingly lucid no one can doubt who remembers the few master touches by which the artistic temperament is made to breathe before the reader in the following passage:

"a soul fit to receive
Delight at every sense; you can believe
Sordello foremost in the regal class
Nature has broadly severed from her mass
Of men, and framed for pleasure, as she frames
Some happy lands, that have luxurious names.

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You recognise at once the finer dress
Of flesh that amply lets in loveliness
At eye and ear, while round the rest is furled
(As though she would not trust them with her
world)

A veil that shows a sky not near so blue,
And lets but half the sun look fervid through.

How can such love?— . . .

. . . fresh births of beauty wake

Fresh homage, every grade of love is past,
With every mode of loveliness : then cast
Inferior idols off their borrowed crown
Before a coming glory. Up and down
Runs arrowy fire, while earthly forms combine
To throb the secret forth ; a touch divine—
And the scaled eyeball owns the mystic rod ;
Visibly through his garden walketh God.”

More touching to some of us than the just-quoted description of a youthful poet are the powerful lines in which Browning himself, speaking for once in his own person, chooses, as the life-long mistress of his heart, Humanity in its most hungry, tattered and forlorn aspect, declaring that it is just the supreme need, the unsatisfied craving, the forlorn wretchedness, which have won his love.

“Peasants, queens,
Take them, made happy by whatever means,
Parade them for the common credit, vouch
That a luckless residue, we send to crouch
In corners out of sight, was just as framed
For happiness, its portion might have claimed
As well.”

SORDELLO AT THE EAST END

It is impossible to quote at length the marvellous passage in which he symbolises the suffering he yearns over, pausing at last to say how the miserable, tired out, despised existence of the Many

“seems to fall

Toward me—no wreath, only a lip’s unrest
To quiet, surcharged eyelids to be pressed
Dry of their tears upon my bosom. Strange
Such sad chance should produce in thee such
change,
My love! warped souls and bodies!”

Well may the lover of “warped souls and bodies” passionately remind us of the need of a Power above us and beyond us, and add, with profound significance:

“But of a Power its representative
Who, being for authority the same,
Communication different, should claim
A course, the first chose and this last revealed—
This Human clear, as that Divine concealed—
What utter need!”

That is a need which the founders of the University Settlements did not fail to recognise—a need which was present to the mind of him with whose memory Toynbee Hall must ever be associated, as well as to the preacher who wrote concerning the Oxford House:—“We find that a lot of men at Oxford, while perfectly recognising the preference of others for a work wholly cut off from a particular religious tie, yet for

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themselves feel that the secular work has its best background in a 'foyer' of worship and prayer."

There are some who seem to fear that these Settlements are not secular enough for their purpose, as though the ruling out of the world into "sacred" and "secular" were not of itself a kind of profanity.

"All service ranks the same with God,"

and, if to clean a window for His sake be often better than to preach a sermon, then why should there be these futile divisions and distinctions? To assume that churches and parishes are all very well for the West, but that agnosticism is the only straight road to the hearts of costermongers, and that nothing is so damning to work in the East as any positive belief—that is a theory which shall not here be admitted. No, if the Settlements die, it will not be because they are wrecked on religious controversies, but because they sink for want of religious faith.

Well might Westcott say at the meeting which united Oxford and Cambridge in one "indissoluble bond," not "to baffle God who loves the world," but to try at least to put themselves at His service:

"I certainly cannot forget—how can I forget?—that the central fact of my faith—of our faith—brings before us with a power that nothing could surpass, the supreme truth that all that is noblest in life is common to men as men. I cannot forget that the crowning sign of the Christ was not the restoration of lost powers, was

SORDELLO AT THE EAST END

not even the temporal conquest of death, but that a gospel is preached to the poor. I cannot forget that we believe—and profess our belief—in one Church in which all diversities of class and endowment are only provisions for the fulfilment of diversities of office.”

The work of the Settlements must, it is true, often include drudgery, friction, weariness; but how true it is that

“This work is a work which has the special qualities of mercy—it is twice blessed,—and, if the blessing prove greater on one side than on the other, it will be on the side of those that go there rather than on the side of those to whom they go.”

This paper has touched on Browning’s eloquent description of that artistic temperament, all athirst for beauty, sensuous and spiritual, with which Sordello was gifted for blessing or for cursing. Nowhere perhaps are the special dangers of such a nature—and Browning is ever emphasising their perils—more likely to be fostered than in life at Oxford or Cambridge. Which of us, feeling in ourselves those very possibilities, does not shudder in reading of how, in this world, Sordello failed

“As one content to merely be supposed
Singing or fighting elsewhere, while he dozed”?

If there be any who realise the good which the University Settlements may do in strengthening the moral fibre and spiritual earnestness of the

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workers, but doubt on the other hand whether there will be any practical result in the neighbourhood which they try to help, there are two facts of which they may be reminded. First, let them consider that the whole system of local administration in England is based on the tacit assumption that there exists everywhere "a resident leisured class" able and willing to do the work of Vestries, Poor Law Boards, and the like; and then reflect that in the East of London such a class is ruinously absent.

In the second place, let them remember all the harm that has been done by a fussy patronising benevolence on the one hand and a cold mechanical officialism on the other, and ask themselves whether there be any gift more certain to be fruitful of good than that deep, patient, individual love which we are taught to pray for as the very bond of peace and of all perfectness, the love which seeks intimate knowledge, frequent intercourse, individual relationship. Surely the inference is not far to seek. The residents at the Settlement ought to supply at least a few of that class of much-needed municipal workers who in the past have been too often only conspicuous in the East End by their absence. They ought also, by the mere fact that they are neighbours in a literal sense, and have a right to share in the common needs and sympathies of the community, to be able to enter into relations of simple friendship and brotherhood with those among whom they dwell. What is sometimes called friendship is often as great a sham as what is sometimes

SORDELLO AT THE EAST END

called brotherhood, but that does not change the fact that the true friendship and the true brotherhood are divine boons. Never are they more divine than when they overleap class distinctions, forget traditional prejudices, ignore sectarian divisions. A great compeer of Browning's has given us a very lovely and perfect lyric, in which the two voices sing of the love of lovers that it is

“Love that can shape or can shatter a life till the life shall have fled?

Nay, let us welcome him, Love that can lift up a life from the dead.”

And may it not be said of all unselfish passion, above all of that enthusiasm of humanity which is neither more nor less than divinely inspired love, that it may be vital enough to kindle into a more vivid and beautiful existence even the dull unbeautiful deadness of East London?

“Nay, let us welcome him, Love that can lift up a life from the dead.”

In an article in *Time*, in which Canon Barnett gave a clear and detailed account of the plan and aim of “A University Settlement,” he reminds us that

“Vain will it be to get good houses, clean streets, and universal comfort, if at the same time men do not find delight in service. It would be safe indeed to go a step further, and add, vain is the gospel which makes a man anxious to save his own soul, if at the same time he is not made more anxious to give his soul to save his friends.”

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Surely that is a truth not very unlike the truth expressed in that quotation from "Sordello" with which this paper opened.

Canon Barnett rightly tells us that—"Happily there is no need to rouse public feeling as to the way in which the poor—that is, the majority of Englishmen—live. Unnoticed influences have brooded like spirits over the chaos of politics and trade, and directed the thought of men to one end."

How many thousands of men and women in England have been stirred at the eleventh hour to a really energetic resolve that Lazarus shall no longer lie untended at the gate! The filth and squalor of our large towns have not, alas, come suddenly and recently into existence. How is it that, only suddenly and recently, the question has become a burning question, and at last, thus late in the day, there seems likely to be some little outcome of good work?

Why is it? It is because at last faith's furnace has waxed hot enough to melt even callous and stupid hearts to shame. Not Browning only, but scores of inspired workers, known and unknown, have been ready to immolate their very souls and bodies in this furnace rather than fall down and worship the eyeless golden image of the dwellers-at-ease, and at last, after long waiting, there has been a vision of God.

GEORGE FREDERICK WATTS, R.A.

UNMOVED by changing forms of many a creed,
He served the Altar with a toil divine,
Filled Christ's own chalice with the sacred wine
And broke the bread for sacramental need,
Stooped low the sad and hungry souls to feed
Who make their life the dungeon where they
pine,
Through their dim grating called the stars to
shine,
And wrought for Him who is the Light indeed.
Now, past deep waters that he crossed dry-shod,
Beyond Philistia, quit of Amalek,
In joy of artistry and honour increast,
He does the bidding of the beautiful God—
An acolyte of the Eternal Priest,
After the order of Melchizedek.

FEBRUARY FAIR-MAIDS

THEY are here, the February Fair-Maids, and we think of the great poet, not dead, but ever speaking to our hearts, who enshrined for us in words of welcome the quaint country name of these "first-lings," doubtless the name they bore in that Lincolnshire village of his boyhood where "the little glen in the neighbourhood called by the old monkish name of Holywell" he remembered "white with snowdrops in their season"—that village of which he wrote in sweet Miltonian cadences in his "Ode to Memory":

"Come from the woods that belt the grey hill-side,

The seven elms, the poplars four,
That stand beside my father's door,
And chiefly from the brook that loves
To purl o'er matted cress and ribbed sand,
Or dimple in the dark of rushy coves . . .
O! hither lead thy feet!

Pour round mine ears the live-long bleat
Of the thick-fleeced sheep from wattled folds,
Upon the ridged wolds."

There is something in the cool tranquility of the pastoral and sylvan picture, the woods, the running water, the "wattled folds," that seems a fit setting for the glen of snowdrops, those white "fair maids" of February, snooded with that delicate and vital green which makes them the

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very promise and type of stainless purity and eternal spring.

But, after all, their loveliness appeals to us with a more moving charm, perhaps, as they come forth in their dazzling hopefulness from the sooty mould of old flower-pots on London window-sills, "innocent whitenesses" (to steal and reverse Charles Lamb's pretty name for the little chimney-sweeps) as yet unspotted by the bleak and wintry world. Before our London almond tree, our wild "flow'r o' the peach," puts forth the delicate rose-flush of heaven in stony corners of our sordid streets, before the chestnut buds begin to glisten, or the birds to make their sweet springtide "jargoning" in grimy London gardens and in smutty London squares, the snowdrops lift their heads in graceful hardihood, as unsullied as *Pompilia*, as unconscious as *Pippa*.

Is it an accident that our English country-folk have rechristened so many of our white flowers with such especial felicity? The pheasant-eyed narcissus is the Sweet Nancy, the white flower of the Italian painters is the Mary Lily, the snowdrop is the Fair Maid of February. But, after all, for the last of these three, the name by which it is most widely known is the loveliest and most appropriate. White as the driven snow it is, hung upon its smooth stem, tipped with the heavenward-pointing spear, as if it had indeed dropped there, with the inimitable poise of clinging rain or pendent dew, instead of having in truth arisen, after the divinely human fashion, through slow processes of struggling development, extracting beauty from

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ugliness, and purity from "a handful of poor earth."

This brief paper was suggested by the haunting music of that one line in Tennyson's unrhymed poem to a snowdrop from which its title is taken ; but it is in his far more perfect lyric of "Early Spring," a lyric which must surely last as long as the English language lasts, that the snowdrop and the crocus speak to us most :

"O Heart, look down and up
Serene, secure,
Warm as the crocus cup,
Like snowdrops pure."

It is in a lyric even briefer, and for once as simple and as musical, that Browning has bequeathed to us a line about our February flower :

"For each glance of the eye so bright and black,
Though I keep with heart's endeavour,—
Your voice, when you wish the snowdrops back,
Though it stay in my soul for ever!—"

"Yet I will but say what mere friends say,
Or only a thought stronger ;
I will hold your hand but as long as all may,
Or so very little longer !"

That is simple enough for a dullard, and it breathes the magic which cannot be defined ; in a word, it is poetry.

But loveliest magic of all, passing even this of language, is in the snowdrop itself, in silent and

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natural ways, transmuting the black earth of London into a flower fit for the angels, and yet more fit for men and women :

Like to life's poetry that comes not by
A poet's dreams, but blossoms in the dust
Of lowly deeds and patient-handed toil.

PHILOSOPHY, POETRY, AND THE LABOUR PARTY

"IN reply to the just and urgent claims of the workmen suddenly deprived of their means of livelihood, and unable in a day to find another," cried Auguste Comte—I quote from M. Levy Bruhl's summary—"our economists can only repeat with merciless pedantry their barren aphorism about absolute industrial liberty. To all complaints they dare to answer that it is a question of time! And this to men who require food to-day!"

But Comte was not of those who content themselves with quack remedies or cheap social nostrums. He liked to say "that the consideration of duty is bound up with the spirit of the whole." . . . "Every one," he taught, "has duties, and towards all. No one has any right properly so called. . . . In us the intellect is only a means. Love is the principle, action is the end."

This is calming and bracing doctrine, after utterances of a blatantly selfish kind, published under the heading of "The Liberals and the Labour Men," glorifying self-interest as the pivot of human life.

Who can doubt that Comte is right and that Love, not the lower motive just named, is at the heart of all true communal progress and evolution?

It is the hidden spring of that self-control

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which a well-known poet and essayist has proclaimed as the most valuable of all habits, and goes even deeper than the desired intercourse between labour and academic knowledge so convincingly advocated by Canon Barnett.

Like all vital and noble forces, Love, as the principle of action, needs and demands the widest and deepest knowledge attainable within the boundaries of Love's own limiting obligations. Shelley, whose sympathy with labour was passionate, wrote :

“The wise want love, and those who love want wisdom :

And all best things are thus confused to ill—
Many are strong and rich and would be just,
But live among their suffering fellow-men
As if none felt; they know not what they do.”

But Shelley's Demogorgon, in a vision that passes beyond the horizon of our mortal day and yet includes it, sees that

“Love from its awful throne of patient power
In the wise heart, from the last giddy hour
Of dread endurance, from the slippery steep,
And narrow verge of crag-like agony, springs
And folds over the world its healing wings.
Gentleness, Virtue, Wisdom, and Endurance,
These are the seals of that most firm assurance
Which bars the pit over Destruction's
strength.”

It may be that there is no perfect art, even of

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living, no absolute loveliness, even of creation, in which there is not a fine self-restraint.

But Labour, the mighty Cyclops, long prisoned yet ever of close kinship with Olympus, must needs draw strength and beauty from more elemental sources than mere social conventions, or traditional orthodoxies of intellectual scribes or wrangling pharisees.

May not Labour in this be like the poet-girl who, in that romance of social reform which Ruskin is said to have honoured as the greatest poem of the nineteenth century, tells us that she

“ . . . had relations with the Unseen, and drew
The elemental nutriment and heat
From nature, as earth feels the sun at nights,
Or as a babe sucks surely in the dark.”

I have had the high honour of living in the closest intercourse with labouring people, and I know that their lives, which in pathos are ever on the edge of tragedy, often breathe the very spirit of the deepest poetry.

The burden that the Cyclops must bear in city streets and slums, where the very soap and water have to be paid for, indirectly in time and strength if not in money, is a load that only the hardest heart can realise without shame and grief, when once the sense of corporate responsibility and practical brotherhood has been permanently awakened.

But even there, and still more here, in the country, where some measure of lovely vision and decent living are within reach of many labouring

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homes, there is a pagan joy of living, a fatalistic acceptance of the inevitable lot, an underlying faith, not in churches or shibboleths, but in all that Dolly Winthrop trusted to as "Them above"—a heart not far from the eternities, and eyes that look at moments towards the everlasting hills.

Yet I cannot deny that the labourer whom I know best—a skilful workman, upright, loyal, tender-hearted—is, or at all events *was*, when he first crossed my path, deeply seared and embittered by our unjust and unchristian social conditions, and only too ready to respond to such a dastardly cry as that here reprinted as a cruel misrepresentation of the intentions of the Labour Party—that Labour Party from which we look for a battle-cry ennobled by the awful sufferings which Labour has endured.

Here is the terrible line which made me suffer shame for the mighty Cyclops whom I love and reverence, and on whose weary shoulders rest the very foundations of society :

" Self-interest is the strongest motive in human nature. Look after your own interests. Stand by your own class."

To write that upon the Labour programme would indeed be to sink to the level of degrading class feeling and class distinctions. It is not only unworthy of a great cause, it is also suicidal ; for any section of the community that founds conduct upon the selfish pedantries of the old, already

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superseded, political economy is writing upon itself a sentence of death.

Besides our own island poets, there is one bard of world-wide fame who has especially avowed himself the poet of Democracy. He, Walt Whitman, looks not to self-interest, but to love, as the moving power of the world, and sees round every human heart that divine halo, though our eyes are often blind to it.

When he bids you,

“Whoever you are ! claim your own at any hazard,”

he speaks not of the poor toys of the moment, but of that which neither time nor death can wrest from you. He bids you be

“Master or Mistress in your own rights over Nature, elements, pain, passions, dissolution.”

There are creeds and crowns that are merely political, of which he would say with Mr. Swinburne through the lips of Hertha—

“A creed is a rod
And a crown is of night ;
But this thing is of God,
To be man with thy might,
To grow straight in the strength of thy spirit,
And live out thy life as the light.”

He believes with Wordsworth that Life

“ . . . is energy of love
Divine or human, exercised in strife,

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In pain or tribulation and ordained,
If so approved and sanctified, to pass
Through shades of silent rest to endless joy."

Shelley wrote of love:

"It makes the reptile equal to the God."

But Browning gives to the same thought an expression at once juster and more daring:

"For the loving worm within its clod
Were diviner than a loveless god
Among his worlds, I will dare to say."

The crawling of the worm is not for man—least of all for "Labour men," dear to the Eternal Craftsman who chose the shed of a carpenter as the nursery on earth of Divine Love.

Shelley, who defied the horrible travesties of Christianity too often current under its name, yet wrote concerning the true symbol of sacrificial love that

" . . . blazoned, as on Heaven's immortal
noon,
The Cross leads generations on."

And M. Levy Bruhl reminds us that Comte towards the close of his life read every day in that little book of "The Imitation" which bears the name of one who lived a hard and self-renouncing life.

They have both moved the world and bequeathed, to us who love and labour, thoughts to strengthen that invaluable habit of self-control from within, whereby labour may achieve some of

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the mighty victories so finely suggested by Mr. Frederick Rogers, who has hope that "the horrible conditions of so much of our factory life, the tragedy of the aged in industry, the long hours of labour for some, and the difficulty of obtaining labour for others," may at last be immediately and energetically grappled with.

Year by year the great army of Labour must count its maimed and slain upon the battlefield. It is on their behalf that the mighty host has now become articulate. It is a great moment. May we not say to Labour, as Mr. George Meredith said to Age, when speaking of that Nature whereby, as he teaches, "the gloomy Wherefore of our battlefield" is solved "in the Spirit,"

"But hast thou in thy season set her fires
To burn from Self to Spirit through the lash,
Honoured the sons of Earth shall hold thee
high:
Yea, to spread light when thy proud letter I
Drops prone and void as any thoughtless
dash" ?

ELECTION OF THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL

Now let your great traditions guard your heart,
Brave city of Milton, Shakespeare's capital !
Where good and evil still hold carnival
And in your civic contests bear a part !
Let proud philosophy and love and art
Call forth artillery from their arsenal
To thunder for your rights municipal
And sweep corruption from your crowded mart !
No slave of party ever can be free ;
Oh, learn of charity from that Saint Paul
To whom you dedicate your central dome,—
A citizen of no mean city, he,—
And keep your altar-hearth aglow for all
To make, amid your many mansions, Home !

THE SOUL OF THE PEOPLE A PLEA FOR DIVERSITY IN UNITY

WE hear much on all hands of physical deterioration, and whatever may be the precise ultimatum on this matter, it is at all events certain that to multitudes of our fellow-citizens the conditions of a sound physical life and a home fit for the rearing of children seem to be not only unattainable, but almost beyond hope. It is true that every man must first bear his own sufficient load of individual responsibility, in the effort to live honestly and nobly in this world of harassing conflict and sordid competition. But he who can impotently stand unhelping and unmoved, while the souls and bodies of his own people and kindred go down under burdens too heavy to be borne, must be dead to the essential verities by which we claim to be a Christian nation. For such a nation takes upon itself the name of a Master in social ethics who taught that, although the suffering inherent in the discipline of this transient outward body must not even weigh in the scale against the education of an eternal and beautiful spirit, yet the sons and daughters of men should be fair and healthy as the glorious lilies of the field ; taught that for necessary food and clothing it is not His will that they should lack ;—taught that to close the heart against the physical needs of any human creature was to court a worse fate than drowning with a millstone round the neck ; and left, as a vital part

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of His tradition, the daily consecration of the body as a temple of His own transcendent Presence.

But the problem of physical deterioration must be attacked at its source and centre as well as through its environment. Our whole social structure demands gradual rebuilding after a diviner plan until there be given to every man the birthright of such an outward lot as shall leave the life of the soul unshackled and unimpaired. Nevertheless it is impossible even to glance at modern therapeutics without perceiving that in all national uplifting the *soul* of the people reacts upon the body, and the highest level of racial efficiency will never be attained where there is spiritual flaccidity and blindness and corruption.

Without ever wholly separating the two considerations, or regarding the claims of the spirit to the exclusion of the claims of the body, it may be permissible, on non-controversial and non-party lines, to touch upon one cardinal error which seems to permeate official dissensions in the so-called religious life of our unchristian Christian empire.

I am a woman. I believe in those profound distinctions of sex wherein lies much of what is highest and most godlike in the nature made in the image of the Eternal.

“Everywhere

I see in the world the intellect of man,
That sword, the energy, his subtle spear,
The knowledge which defends him like a shield—
Everywhere.”

But when Robert Browning thus defined the

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masculine prerogative, through the lips of the old Pope in "The Ring and the Book," he was far indeed from denying to woman that share in the guidance of the imperial hearth which even Ruskin claimed for her at the very moment when he warned her against cheap feminine effrontery in the direction of theological disputations. There is much that I gladly leave to the masculine sword and spear and shield, for I know well that

"The woman's cause is man's : they rise or sink Together."

But I cannot forget that on woman rests the crowning responsibility of motherhood, and no true woman, whether married or unmarried, can wholly ignore the needs of the children who surround her, even though those children may not be her own. Therefore women may in all modesty and charity have a word to say, on behalf of the children in our schools and churches, on whom the offence of our quarrelsome literalism reacts with deadening and disastrous result. And, since women are popularly supposed to be religious reactionaries, it is perhaps not unfitting that the many English-women who believe that the Church needs reforming from within should, by finding a spokeswoman, however unworthy, utter their plea for a sane and progressive religious unity, a unity strengthened and deepened by the catholic diversity which it includes.

It must be clear to the meanest understanding that, unless the entire historic ideal of the *Ecclesia* be a stereotyped and depraved futility, the eccle-

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siastical cannot be wholly separated from the theological and the ethical.

The magnification of orthodoxy by subservient selfishness and narrow bigotry has been once for all branded with scorn by the Master's scathing denunciation of self-seeking and self-righteous dignitaries as vipers and hypocrites, but that denunciation was perfectly consonant with his choice of an honest and orthodox bigot for that sudden heart-stirring illumination which made of a man, proud at once of his civic liberties and his ecclesiastical education, the most catholic and humbly self-sacrificing of His ambassadors.

There can be little doubt that those who regard themselves as the responsible leaders of Christianity in England stand just now in a crossway pass of extreme peril and have a right to remind their followers everywhere that England in this matter also expects every man to do his duty. On the one hand a hard, literal, fossilised interpretation of the creeds daily turns away thousands from altars to which "the feast's own Founder" would welcome every earnest heart. On the other hand, the very foundation of all that makes for home and peace and brotherhood in our rotten social fabric is being undermined by a tide of neo-paganism, a tide which, held at bay for a time by that rock whereon the ancient Church was built as the citadel of mutual reverence and steadfast covenant in man's daily intercourse with his fellows, now seeks to sweep away everything beneath the iridescent foam of its self-indulgent pseudo-philosophy, except the shifting sands of

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animalism, emotionalism, and blatant sentimental rhapsody.

"The laws of marriage," of which Tennyson long since wrote that they were, in his ideal woman,

"charactered in gold

Upon the blanchèd tablets of her heart,"

are openly mocked at, or treated with a scarcely veiled contempt; and one of the sincerest and most distinguished of our sociological writers in the present day has indicated with sufficient plainness in his recent utterances concerning education that, in his opinion, stimulus is more important than discipline or so-called "morality," and that the teachers of our boys need not be over-nice or sternly pure-hearted if only they will call forth in every possible direction the dormant energies of slowly awakening manhood, forgetting that, while apathy is indeed the most hopeless of deadly sins, yet there is, as in the vision of Coleridge's "Ancient Mariner," a ghastly Life-in-Death of lurid sensationalism that throws the dice against Death-in-Life with a perpetual risk of an even deeper perdition.

Between these two extremes of ecclesiastical idolatry and hysterical materialism, regarding as beyond present cavil the vast multitude of the so-called Free Churches, and considering only the form of religion hitherto chosen by the State for self-expression, since, for those of us who are Anglicans, criticism should begin at home, we have the three labelled companies within the visible national shrine, too often more desirous of keeping

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their own phylacteries intact than of realising that eternal fraternity in the universal Fatherhood, to which the Founder of their religion sought to redeem the souls and bodies of men.

Everywhere, both within and without the Church, there are good men and true who lay down their lives daily for the faith that rules their conduct through the Spirit of Truth. But not the less is it certain that the tares still grow among the wheat, sown by the Power that walks in darkness and delights to scatter maleficent seed wherever there are divisions and wranglings within the sacred precincts. And therefore is it still painfully evident that each of the three controversial groups within the consecrated edifice seeks eagerly to legalise its own exclusive interpretation of the great charter, and is too much occupied in proclaiming that it is not as other men to have time for that ever-present kingdom into which none may enter save through the doorways of love. All alike are guilty of the same primary mistake, whether it be those of us who demand above all else the externals of a beautiful and ancient symbolism, as a witness to that divine Self-sacrifice in which the veriest "Low Churchman" does, though he would find for it some other form of expression, in his heart devoutly believe; or those who ask chiefly for legalised freedom and a faith that lives by works; or those who, in their eagerness to glorify what has come to them through the crude formula of an illiterate age, forget how the mystery of sacrificial redemption and the unspeakable humility of Love, may be blasphemed

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and distorted by the inadequacy of crude language, or by the squalid forms of an irreverent familiarity. "High," and "Broad" and "Low" alike lose sight too often of that height and breadth and depth of the Divine Love to which all alike should witness, and through whose power all social and religious progress must ever proceed. If they really believed, as they think they believe, that the Divine Spirit is present in the Church to guide into all Truth, then they would fear no multiplicity of opinion, no variety of intellectual belief, in a Church that would be unmistakable in its ethical unity and would find ample expression in the simple yet mystic sacraments of the Water and Bread and Wine. If, cleaving the wood, we find the Eternal there, and partaking of the broken loaf we find Him present also in that symbol of our fellowship with the whole family in heaven and earth, and, bowing our heart to that cup of sorrow which is the privilege of our common humanity, we share in His sacred chalice, can we not forego the petty and vulgar clamour which seeks to prescribe to other citizens of the Holy City the precise shape of their vesture or the suitable ritual for their communion?

Can we not trust all details to the informing and inspiring Spirit? Must we fetter the Body that we name His temple, lest superstition should creep in, or Truth should walk waywardly, or Love should fall to baseness?

There was One, the son of a Jewish peasant maiden, who, when He was asked how and where men should worship, discovered to His questioners

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His true Divinity when He answered: "God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit and in truth."

He was right who taught that men will receive as much of the Divine Life as they are able to receive—neither less nor more; and what is true of the individual soul must be true also of that corporate fellowship which history has named the *Ecclesia*.

But that will best be attained by absolute freedom of religious teaching in accordance with the wish of each child's parents, giving to each religious or "secularist" contingent in the great army the choice of its own teachers, the control, *by* that section of the people and *for* that section of the people, of its own religious or ethical teaching, while securing under the popular control of the whole united kingdom the intellectual and physical efficiency of each.

The highest and most vital unity, both in the realm of what we call "Nature" and in the world of human affairs, is correlative with expansion, development, complexity. Uniformity, on the other hand, is always deadening and retrograde in its influence. In national education—in imperial education—there can be no fundamental and progressive unity which does not include perfect freedom of diversity and rest upon absolute equality of opportunity. No Education Bill and no new Rubric can be of enduring value unless this double condition be fulfilled.

Of this at least we may be certain, that if a day ever come in which Christianity in Church and State shall have ceased all useless wrangling and

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morbid self-analysis, and, like her Master, shall have given herself up entirely to feeding and healing, educating and redeeming, the bodies and the souls of men, in that day degeneration and deterioration will be stayed at their source and we shall see new heavens and a new earth.

LOAVES TO THE LOAF-MAKER BY A SONG-MAKER

[The Archbishop [of York] . . . mentioned that he was very much touched the other day by receiving from a journeyman baker towards the building of a church in his parish the sum of £500, the savings of a lifetime, along with a letter in which he said he gave the amount as a small thank-offering for the benefits God had given him ever since his baptism.—YORKSHIRE POST, April 21, 1910.]

Oh, my brother, my brother, I would I could do
as much !

Every day thro' the heat and stress
You made your loaves for the Lord to bless—
Loaves you could see and touch—
To feed the hungry or help the faint,
Bring needed life to sinner and saint,
Like the sun, who thro' all the journey's
length
To the just and the unjust giveth strength !

Oh, my brother, my brother, I would I had always
made

At daily cost of the oven's heat
Such holy loaves for the folk to eat—
Served as the Master bade—
Still counting even the counter-pelf
A trust from the Lord of Life Himself,
And feeding the folk with the best of good
Made quick in the fires of brotherhood !

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Oh, I have striven, have striven, to earn my right
to my bread,
Were it only to lift with joyful song
The bitter days that should make men strong,
Or give, in love's own stead,
A call to battle, a passing breath
Of courage and hope in face of death !
I made the loaves, but the loaves were few,
And I often failed, as the Master knew.

You, my brother, my brother, were crowned with
a ceaseless toil,
Till out of your faithful, labouring life—
The furnace flush of your oven-strife—
You won a thrifty spoil,
You, who have laid on the altar-stone
A double gift for the Lord to own—
The daily bread that is life-bread good,
And the Bread of the Spirit's Brotherhood !

You who have fed men's bodies to work the will
of the soul—
Faithfully serving, won in the end
To helping the soul itself, my friend,
The body's life to control,
Soul-hunger's agony to redress,
And man with the Bread of Life to bless,
So heartening singers, who with bent head,
Have wrought, in the mills of God, man's
bread.

THE CHILDREN OF THE STATE *

THE wise care of the children of the State is a duty beyond all party question, and the conciliatory, statesmanlike energy of the State Children's Aid Association will do much to strengthen the hands of men on both sides of the House in any measures of reform which come before Parliament touching this great and perplexing responsibility. Among our Poor Law Guardians are men and women whose self-denial and devotion put to shame many of their critics ; but Guardians cannot move in advance of the national verdict, and it is a part of the work of this society to enlighten unofficial opinion.

If we understand the Association aright, more individual care for the children of the State is the very heart of its contention—more home-life, with all its variety of give and take and rough and smooth ; less of that safe, machine-like, inflexible institution-routine, which, from its very perfection and inevitableness, deadens character, crushes spontaneity, and injures health. Courage, resource, originality—what chance is there of these where childhood is governed in the aggregate and humanity is adjusted to the average ? What though the great and tender humourist who wrote “*Oliver Twist*” has taught this over and over again with tragic and reiterated emphasis ?

* A portion of an article which appeared in the *Guardian* in April 1898.

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Unhappily it needs to be hammered at still, including as it does the other terrible truism that in such a uniformity of process it is usually the finest nature that suffers most. On the other hand, if ordinary children need constant and discerning care, how much more the children who are born into the world with a physique weakened by parental poverty or vice, even when the character bears no hereditary taint of parental feebleness or despair.

Education, while reckoning with heredity, may often take courage from the possibility of a healthy atavism, and seek to evoke the moral beauty of some forgotten ancestor, if the nearer forebears have been less promising. Nor dare we forget that in the most unattractive child there is ever latent the divine ideal of the unseen angel. And yet once more, it cannot be too often repeated, in regard to much that is most tender and lovely in the earliest unfolding of human identity, that the more delicate and sensitive it is, the more easily may it be smitten and warped ; so that it is likely to be precisely those children whose future citizenship might have most enriched the State with noble refinement and subtle wisdom who, if bred up in huge institutions, will, for the term of their mortal life, be stunted and debased by the necessarily unvarying commonplaces formalised to meet the requirements not of the particular child, but of a whole herd of children. If any objector reply that nothing is so healthy as the normal and the commonplace, that is but an evasion after all. It might indeed have force if

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originality were, as in the gospel of the Decadent, merely synonymous with unreality and morbidity ; but no one who cares for children with a love which gives insight can escape the feeling that childhood, even when it is most normal and vigorous, is, in its very buoyancy and simplicity, full of ever new surprises of individual charm. Alas ! charm is not the word associated in any memory with that name, in itself a brand, which is happily being banished from the tongue of decency, now that the undeserved and unasked burden of dependent poverty no longer labels as a "pauper" that "child of the State" who, like every other child ever born into this wicked world, is also a "child of God." Instead of the old "pauper spirit," which was only another word for apathy, we want, by means of home life, to develop in every child more of that vigour and strenuous personality of which Chapman wrote so bravely :

"A spirit that on life's rough sea
Loves to have his sails fill'd with a lusty wind,
Even till his sail-yards tremble, his masts crack,
And his rapt ship run on her side so low
That she drinks water, and her keel ploughs air.
There is no danger to a man that knows
What life and death is."

SNOWDROP-TIME

The author wishes to acknowledge her debt, since she wrote these lines when haunted by "E. Nisbet's" beautiful poem "Little Brown Brother."

"It's rather dark in the earth to-day,"
Said one little bulb to his brother ;
"But I thought that I felt a sunbeam ray—
We must strive and grow till we find the way !"
And they nestled close to each other.
Then they struggled and toiled by day and by
night,
Till two little snowdrops, in green and white,
Rose out of the darkness and into the light,
And softly kissed one another.

DAFFODILS

It is a late spring, but one flower has sprung up and blossomed with fairy-like rapidity—first the blade, then the bud, after that the full flower in the sun. It is here, not singly, but in troops and companies. In the avenue to the great beautiful house hard by, it stars the turf on either hand in wild, unstudied profusion, though more resplendent on that side of it which is sheltered from the east wind than on those other levels where the cutting north-easter blows. In our own cottage gardens the bright yellow blossoms are already gay. They seem to bring incarnate sunshine into the wintry borders—the one bit of colour that can rival in its brilliance the glorious red and pink of japonica and ribes, starring with gold the dull garden-beds, under the windows and

“beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.”

They laugh for joy, and justify Wordsworth's epithet of “jocund” as their inevitable right and title. They were barely in time this year to

“take the winds of March with beauty
Before the swallow dares,”

but the April showers are much to their liking, and indeed it is in the “Shepherd's Calendar” for April that Spenser bids us

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“Strowe the ground with daffadownillies,
And cowslips, and kingcups, and loued lillies.”

Did not Broome write long ago :

“The joyous spring draws nigh ! Ambrosial
showers

Unbind the earth, the earth unbinds the flowers,
The flowers blow sweet, the daffodils unfold

The spreading glories of their blooming gold ” ?

That they have always made merry “beside the margin of a lake,” Spenser had noted long before the days of Wordsworth, for he tells us that when news was brought to the mother of Marianell that Britomart had killed him, the messenger found her

“Among her watry sisters by a pond,
Gathering sweete daffadillyes, to have made
Gay girlonds from the Sun their forheads fayr
to shade.”

Old Richardson gives many spellings of this flower's name—a name which seems at first to have been *daffadils* : through the French *Aspodille* and the Italian *Asphodelo* he traces back to the Greek *Ασφοδελος*.

The old *daffadil* spelling recalls at once Constable's charming song, of which the first two verses run :

“Diaphenia, like the daffa-down-dilly,
White as the sunne, faire as the lilly,
Heigh ho, how I doe love thee !
I doe love thee as my lambs
Are belovèd of their dams,
How blest were I if thou would'st prove me !

DAFFODILS

“Diaphenia, like the spreading roses,
That in thy sweetes all sweetes encloses,
 Faire sweet how I doe love thee !
I doe love thee as each flower
Loves the sunne’s life-giving power.
 For dead, thy breath to life might move me.”

Was it that white and gold are the Easter colours and splendour was a part of the transient pomp of Death, the divine messenger, or was it a healthy delight in its very mirthfulness—a sense of tragic contrast, mingling with the glowing joy of hope, that made the older poets not infrequently strew this flower of sunshine above the beloved dust of their dead? In a pastoral masque by Hughes we find the lines:

“On his lovely body shower
 Leaves of roses, virgin lilies,
 Cowslips, violets, daffodillies,
 And with garlands dress the bower.”

And does not Milton

“Bid amarantus all his beauty shed,
And daffadillies fill their cups with tears,
To strow the laureat herse where Lycid lies”?

Our later poet T. E. Brown, in writing of the death of a child, touches a simpler and perhaps more modern note:

“O God, to Thee I yield
The gift Thou givest most precious, most divine !
Yet to what field
I must resign

LEAVES OF PROSE

His little feet
That wont to be so fleet,
I muse. O, joy to think
On what soft brink
Of flood he plucks the daffodils,
On what empurpled hills
He stands, Thy kiss all fresh upon his brow,
And wonders, if his father sees him now ! ”

But indeed every spring garland intertwines
the flower of love with the secret promise of some
far-off goal.

“The dusky strand of death enwoven here
With true Love’s tie, makes Love himself more
dear ” ;

and if even the pagan Eros seemed, though but

“a trifle gay,
The prodigal of an immortal day
For ever spending, and yet never spent,”

the great living poet who wrote that fine description of him wrote also :

“For what is Beauty, if it doth not fire
The loving answer of an eager soul ?
Since ’tis the native food of man’s desire,
And doth to good our varying world control ;
Which, when it was not, was for Beauty’s sake
Desired and made by Love, who still doth make
A beauteous path thereon to Beauty’s goal.”

THE FEEDING OF NECESSITOUS SCHOOL-CHILDREN

[Lunacy is rapidly increasing; poverty does not lessen; while degeneracy and crime have got entirely beyond control. We are very near a precipice, requiring only a "heave-over" to go to pieces.—ALBERT WILSON, M.D., "Education, Personality, and Crime."]

THE virtuous person who refuses to undermine parental responsibility by feeding necessitous school-children forgets that we have already interfered with parental responsibility by compelling thousands of fathers and mothers to send their children to school, whether they wish it or not, and that having done this it is at least our clear duty to take care that no slow murder or mutilation result. There is an overwhelming mass of evidence to prove that these terrible consequences have not infrequently ensued where undeveloped brain-machinery has been at the same time whipped up and starved. The distinguished author of "Education, Personality, and Crime," himself a physician who has had twenty-five years of wide experience, writes that "we are killing mentally and physically hundreds and thousands of [these] our best national assets. . . . The compulsion to attend school tells very heavily on the starving poor, and the injury to the badly nourished and defective children spells ruin for their future careers. . . . Thousands of children are growing up with slightly damaged brains, who attract no special notice from the casual observer. It is, however, just the little damage, sometimes

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curable, which turns the scale against an individual in the struggle for existence. . . . If the child be starved, delicate, or neurotic, the State inflicts untold mental suffering and injury, which may wreck the future career, and even thereby make criminals. . . . It is as hopeless to expect mentation and brain development from a starving child as to move the Cornish express if there is no fuel underneath the engine boiler."

The writer of this grave indictment is not a sentimentalist. He boldly advocates eugenic reform of a very stringent character, and cuts clean through a great many fanciful cobwebs. Nor, on the other hand, does he share the dogmatism of a crude agnostic denial; for he remarks that "to deny the influence of the Spirit on mind and character is to limit science."

But he does not disguise the fact that our present manufacture of criminals and lunatics is a wasteful folly, in which the overpressure of ill-nourished bodies plays a part so disastrous as to need quite as much attention as ethical neglect or the multiplication of the feeble-minded and the unfit by means of ill-advised marriages. Nay, he even goes so far as to say that "it seems as if environment were more important than heredity in the life of the individual." He tells us that, although in his opinion there are to be found among the poor some of the finest potentialities of the race, yet among the boys in prison—many of them only sixteen—"a great amount of deterioration in face and form is to be seen . . . *malnutrition is their ruin.*"

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This assertion with regard to malnutrition he supports with striking and detailed figures in regard to the underweight of boys in reformatories, where the unsatisfactory boys were progressively subnormal in weight as compared with the "good" ones. It has been shown by careful facts and diagrams in the book already quoted that the most important part of the brain, that "pyramidal layer of the prefrontal," of which Shaw Bolton has spoken as "the last to develop" and "the region concerned with the general orderly co-ordination of psychic processes," is incomplete at birth and may be only gradually built up when the child is well nourished and cared for. If young children are so ill-nourished during education as to leave this "master of the house" of thought in infantile incapacity, it is not only they who will suffer; the agony may fall upon their children's children in ever-increasing ratio. If we make it illegal for the poor to withdraw exceptionally sensitive and fragile children from public education, it is no mere charity to lessen the risk by insisting on proper food, but, on the contrary, an act of bare justice. For let it always be remembered that *instruction* is but a small part of education—education is the evoking and unfolding of all that is highest and best in the whole nature, body and soul, as well as mind, and is not the outcome of mental processes alone.

Without entering on controversial ground regarding the Majority and Minority Reports, it may be worth while to answer one statement, in a leaflet now lying before me, which urges against

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the present methods of feeding school-children that an increase in pauperisation is indicated by the greatly increased number of free meals during the foregoing year—there estimated as an advance from 4,546,771 to 7,702,506.

In reply, there are two obvious facts which may be incisively urged.

In the first place, this feeding of necessitous children, where, as at Bradford, it is supported out of the rates—working out at $\frac{1}{2}d.$ in the pound—does but fulfil in another form the obligation of the Guardians to permit no starvation, in accordance with a statute now embodied and strengthened in the Children's Act, a statute to which attention was drawn by the late Rev. B. Waugh, who emphasised its bearing on prevailing conditions by a gruesome story of seven children at Swindon who were dying under the very nose of the relieving officer. By means of the Children's Care Committees, which include much voluntary help of an expert and humane order, the tendency of public meals under a competent Education Authority is to bring careless parents to their duty and increase their sense of responsibility. At Bradford, for instance, in the year ending March 31, 1909, there were 194 parents paying full cost, besides an average of 67 children each day purchasing tickets at full price; and 59 parents paying part of the cost, the total number of individual children coming within this category throughout the year being 610.

The statistics there show that, after deducting rent, the income per head of the 5182 persons, in
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the households sending children to the free meals, only amounted to 1s. 9 $\frac{3}{4}$ d. (presumably per week), and that is not an allowance on which any child can be properly clothed and nourished, at a time when the growing brain is especially in need of sustenance. That more children are fed means, therefore, that there is less destructive starvation, less public and private neglect, more compulsion of lazy or greedy parents to do some small part at least of their duty.

Secondly, even more stress must be laid upon the fact that the maintenance and restraint of criminals and unemployables is a more expensive item to the country than free meals in our midst. Estimating our criminal population on Dr. Albert Wilson's figures at 150,000 and the number of lads passing yearly through our prisons at 16,000, it only remains to be reiterated that in the opinion of this expert, as well as in that of Dr. Arkle, want of nutrition while at school is one chief cause of degeneracy and crime.

With regard to girls, the plea is even more urgent, for they are in a special sense the custodians of the future, and if by overpressure and under-feeding we overstrain or atrophy their capacity for what Browning finely named "the Trust of trusts," then we may expect physical deterioration to go on apace. The study of the facts recently tabulated will show that such deterioration is already dangerously rapid, and in speaking on this subject of child-degeneration it has been well said by one well-known neurologist that our Empire is bleeding to death at its heart. Religious effort does somewhat staunch the wound,

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but there is tragedy in the position of many a young life, thrown upon the world with an affectionate nature and right aspirations, yet either a "born tired," to quote one doctor's nomenclature, or one of those unfortunates to whom apply the same doctor's terrible words regarding arrested brain development through lack of nourishment, when he writes that "the will is to them as a withered plant that might have developed, but has died of starvation soon after birth."

Are thousands of our young lives to find this their fate, or shall we realise in time that, if the State has a right to punish, the State has also a right to protect, and to use, under official guidance and organisation, the help of all those skilled volunteers, women as well as men, who are experts in education and in social amelioration and have escaped the cramping influence of lives bound up in red tape?

Shall we be content that English children, and their children after them, shall in ever-increasing ratio degenerate and decline, or shall we do our best that they may become what Mr. Robert Bridges has so finely imaged for us in his poem entitled "The Fair Brass":

"Heirs of our antique shrines,
Sires of our future fame,
Whose starry honour shines
In many a noble name

"Across the deathful days,
Link'd in the brotherhood
That loves our country's praise,
And lives for heavenly good."

THYRSIS IN A LONDON SQUARE

It is that "sweet season" beloved of Chaucer and of all the poets, the beginning of the blossoming time which Matthew Arnold has associated for all lovers of "Thyrsis" with Oxford and with Clough.

Browning's lines descriptive of the cuckoo's music have become classic, but, even while we quote them, to some of us the thought of a very different poet is present, one less robust, less optimistic, with more of the minor third in his voice, yet, like Browning, a lover of men, one who faced all doubts with guileless sincerity, and drew his daily inspiration of help and comfort for the human brotherhood from the "only Source of all our light and life." Who can hear

"the word

In a minor third

There is none but the cuckoo knows,"

without thinking of that "quick despairer," of whom the cuckoo was to Matthew Arnold the symbol, who vanished too soon from our midst before the promise of the golden year had unfolded to his sight, and while still his heart was aching at the thought of human inequalities?—

"Some life of men unblest

He knew, which made him droop, and fill'd his
head.

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He went ; his piping took a troubled sound
Of storms that rage outside our happy ground ;
He could not wait their passing, he is dead.

“ So have I heard the cuckoo’s parting cry,
From the wet field, through the vext garden-
trees,
Come with the volleying rain and tossing
breeze :
The bloom is gone and with the bloom go I !

“ Too quick despairer, wherefore wilt thou go ?—
Soon will the high Midsummer pomps come
on,
Soon will the musk carnations break and
swell,
Soon shall we have gold-dusted snapdragon,
Sweet-William with his homely cottage-
smell,
And stocks in fragrant blow ;
Roses that down the alleys shine afar,
And open, jasmine-muffled lattices,
And groups under the dreaming garden-
trees,
And the full moon, and the white, evening star.”

For us to-day the hedges are still white, and new
fronds of fern are still uncrumpling

“ And blue-bells trembling by the forest ways.”

We have not come yet to the “scent of hay new-
mown,” but already we see the approach of that

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“tempestuous morn in early June,
When the year’s primal burst of bloom is o’er,
Before the roses and the longest day—
When garden-walks, and all the grassy floor,
With blossoms red and white of fallen May,
And chestnut-flowers are strewn.”

The chestnut-flowers are for us but now beginning to fade and the may to fall. London in June is wont to gleam with a strange beauty. Full at all times of a deep and tragic poetry, for a brief space she puts on a wreath of joyous promise that wafts its fragrance hither and thither into her darkest and most poverty-stricken corners, on the wings of a liberal, wide-reaching spring breeze that dips into parks and squares for the healthy sweetness that it carries for a moment into squalid streets and sordid alleys.

One of the loveliest of Clough’s lyrics, “In a London Square,” is said to have been suggested by a tree in Berkeley Square. It fits the season well, and it breathes of a certain hard-won and gentle fortitude, very characteristic of Clough, who, in his sensitiveness to every vagrant sympathy and every influence of his stormy and perplexed century, blent as it was with a strenuous determination to be true to his own individual sense of right and of truth, was necessarily a man of sorrows.

The plane-tree, with its daintily fashioned tassels and wide, cool leaves, grows well in the midst of all the smoke and care and struggle of sad-hearted, fain-to-be-gay, paradoxical London; shares its rainbow sunshine and sudden gleams of springtide,

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and, to those who know the lyric, echoes ever the admonition to a patient and hopeful self-restraint :

“Put forth thy leaf, thou lofty plane,
East wind and frost are safely gone ;
With zephyr mild and balmy rain
The summer comes serenely on ;
Earth, air, and sun, and skies combine
To promise all that's kind and fair :—
But thou, O human heart of mine,
Be still, contain thyself, and bear.

December days were brief and chill,
The winds of March were wild and drear,
And, nearing and receding still,
Spring never would, we thought, be here.
The leaves that burst, the suns that shine,
Had, not the less, their certain date :—
And thou, O human heart of mine,
Be still, refrain thyself, and wait.”

That is one side of Clough, but we find in him the verve and energy also which breathe through those other lines of his :

“Go from the east to the west, as the sun and the
stars direct thee,
Go with the girdle of man, go and encompass
the earth.
Not for the gain of the gold ; for the getting, the
hoarding, the having,
But for the joy of the deed ; but for the Duty to do.
Go with the spiritual life, the higher volition and
action,
With the great girdle of God, go and encompass
the earth.”

THYRSIS IN A LONDON SQUARE

That impulse of world-wide service and ungrudging gifts may well be echoing through many obscure lives to-day in the after-glow of those celebrations of "Empire Day" which we have dedicated to the memory of England's greatest Queen and to the recollection of those vast and humbling responsibilities which unite the Mother Country with her colonies. The way to righteousness and peace is often a strait and difficult path, where it is only too easy to be blinded by our own arrogance, or trapped by our own prejudice. The message of joy, of progress, of universal kinship, has too often been stained, and torn, and debased. It has been blotted by many tears and marred by many cancellings. But Clough was right in those last words he wrote when he bade us remember that every noble effort avails, though its results may be to our own eyes and those of our own generation invisible. Every advancing wave falls back a little. Every year has its winter, but in the new beauty and resurrection of each year's springtide there is ever a symbol of that

"far-off divine event,
To which the whole creation moves."

And the last word remembered to-day shall be from the lips of Thyrsis, found in a pencilled line or two beneath his pillow when he died :

"For while the tired waves, vainly breaking,
Seem here no painful inch to gain,
Far back, through creeks and inlets making,
Comes silent, flooding in, the main."

THE MEMORIAL TO MRS. BROWNING

It has been said that we are a nation of shopkeepers, though the shopkeeper will naturally reply that he may be as noble as any man. But it may be asserted with juster poignancy that too many of our so-called leaders are now a company of fashion-mongers, who are constantly running after some new mode of thought or novel literary type, leaving the stolid majority to take out their moral and intellectual tape-measures for the purpose of testing conformity with what may be called the ancient sartorial rule of thumb, while a small, rather youthful, contingent cut out old ethics to suit new conventions, and, in their own estimation, sanctify folly itself with the sacred word "advanced."

Fifty years after Mrs. Browning's death, among the slaves to passing fashion, she was already out of fashion. There seems to have been a difficulty in collecting the required funds for the Ledbury Memorial in her honour. It is true that her noblest memorial lives in the hearts of that vast unliterary throng described in our Authorised Version as "the common people"; and also in the work of the great poet-theologian, whose influence was the more masculine from the fact that he was too passionate to be sentimental, too many-sided to forget the claims of this homely human life of ours, even when most absorbed in

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the eternal problems, and who wrote of his own proudest achievement :

“ If the rough ore be rounded to a ring,
Render all duty which good ring should do,
And, failing grace, succeed in guardianship,
Might mine but lie outside thine, Lyric Love,
Thy rare gold ring of verse (the poet praised)
Linking our England to his Italy ! ”

The “ posy ” to that ring is too well known to need quoting, and he must indeed be dull of ear who does not feel the passionate music of the opening lines :

“ Oh, Lyric Love, half-angel and half-bird,
And all a wonder and a wild desire, ”—

but it is not in these haunting lines, nor in the last words of “ *Prospice*, ” nor the married melodies of “ *By the Fireside*, ” that Mrs. Browning’s influence is most coercive and penetrating for the outside world, nor even, perhaps, in the “ *One Word More*. ” It is rather in the whole fabric and texture of Browning’s later work, and especially of that marvellous poem of which *Pompilia* is the light and joy.

No one who knows Mrs. Browning’s “ *Aurora Leigh* ” intimately will be likely to come to any real intimacy also with the poems Browning wrote after his marriage, and especially “ *The Ring and the Book*, ” without a sense of deeply wedded kinship here and there between the two.

There is a delightful line of George Meredith’s in which he speaks of certain kinds of song as

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free from "taint of personality." That certainly cannot be said of either of the Brownings. In spite of his wide range and extraordinary diversity of subjects, the author of "Bishop Blougram" and "Rabbi Ben Ezra" is everywhere unmistakable : and in almost all his multitudinous poems his robust and salient personality is recognisable at a glance. That of Elizabeth Barrett, even before they were man and wife, had probably touched his mind and heart the more poignantly because of a vivid and delicate, and almost overbalancing, emotional quality in it, which might well seem opposed to Browning's own more reticent and humorous storm and stress, though both are distinguished by the like vitality or enthusiasm, the like catholic open-mindedness and unbaffled reverence. In both there is the same boldly questioning yet entirely unswerving faith, the same untiring affection for man as man, the same sense of the sacredness of the body as well as the soul, the same worshipping delight in the beauty of ideal womanhood, the same unconquerable belief, so finely expressed in "Aurora Leigh," that

"Earth's crammed with heaven,
And every common bush afire with God."

And, it may be added, the same humour to perceive that

"Only he who sees, takes off his shoes ;
The rest sit round it and pluck blackberries."

Of that poem—which Ruskin is said to have

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named as the greatest of his century—benighted Philistines have occasionally asserted that it is ‘coarse.’ Such people, if they met the Angel of Pity, radiant with divine fire and beauty, would merely complain that it was indecent of him to go barefoot. They need to be reminded, through the lips of Mrs. Browning herself, that what they consider the “coarsest” part of this wonderful life of ours is sacred and vital until the divine breath is withdrawn from it:

“Flower from root,
And spiritual from natural, grade by grade
In all our life. A handful of the earth,
To make God’s image! the despised poor earth,
The healthy odorous earth,—I missed with it
The divine Breath that blows the nostrils out
To ineffable afflatus,—ay, the breath
Which love is. Art is much, but love is more.

Art symbolises heaven, but Love is God
And makes heaven.”

Mrs. Browning did her work so well that her truths have become our truisms. We are, after all, an ungrateful host. In all social reform we have adopted her ideas so completely that half of us forget they are hers. In a bygone day, when courage was needed, this modest and brave woman, out of the deep joy of her own happy love and ideal marriage, took to herself the out-cast and forgotten, and, in the power of her great poem, moved a smug and pharisaical world to rescue the fallen, to redeem the poor, and to face

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with some degree of honesty social problems which had been selfishly ignored.

Let it be once more conceded without hesitation that her best memorial lives on in her husband's work and in her own, and in that change in the theology and social ethics of England, a change that might almost be called a revolution, in which both the Brownings have had a deeper share than is ordinarily recognised. But when the country of her birth is asked for a visible token of gratitude it were shameful to haggle about the price or complain that there is no money in the national purse. We are a cold and stolid people, and occasionally it is to be feared that the slowness of emotion, which we secretly vaunt as indication of faithfulness, does not by any means stand the test of adversity and of time, so that it is not wonderful that Mrs. Browning was sometimes angry with England in the deep wrath of wounded affection. There are certain lines in her "Summing up in Italy (inscribed to intelligent publics out of it)" which hit us hard in our moods of political selfishness and cowardice. Even in remembrance and in constancy we seem to have fallen behind "her Italy." Long ago the municipality of Florence placed on Casa Guidi their noble memorial to Elizabeth Barrett Browning, of whom they wrote there, in the words of Tommaseo, "*Che in cuore di donna conciliave scienze di dotto, e spirito di poeta.*" We cannot equal the beauty of the Florentine inscription, of which only a fragment is given here. Of her it may be said with truth, as

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indeed is witnessed by her own words, that "her Christianity was not confined to church and rubrics—it meant civilisation." There has been no attempt here at any critical appraisement of Mrs. Browning's precise standing as an artist, though, whatever may be the deductions and admissions demanded by such an appraisement, it is only necessary to remember that she wrote the so-called "Sonnets from the Portuguese" in order to ensure her unassailable place among the poets. But there are many who are careless of poetry and who yet owe her a debt of lasting gratitude for her work in the cause of social and political reform.

A FLOWER FOR MRS. BROWNING'S GRAVE

THERE is one flower which cannot be laid too often on Mrs. Browning's grave, for it is her husband's own gift. It blooms perennially, and there may well be surprise that there are not more hands tearing down the sprays of blossom to do her honour.

On this day, the anniversary of her birth, such an offering may well be wreathed about her memory.

In the many disquisitions on "The Ring and the Book" one subject of deep interest may not impossibly have escaped many of the learned commentators, because it is not a point of scholarship, but of elementary human interest. I refer to what I cannot but believe to have been Browning's reason for choosing so extraordinary and terrible a story, as his basis of fact, in the great dramatic poem dedicated to his wife's memory—the essential metal in that elaborately wrought "guard ring" wherewith he protected the golden circlet of love and poesy that had claimed his wife in an eternal marriage.

We have his own explicit authority for his unbounded admiration of "Aurora Leigh," that dramatic romance in which a happy wife and mother wrote with all the courage of virtue and of love, on behalf of her outcast sisters on the one hand and of her noble ideal of marriage on the other.

No so-called love was to Mrs. Browning worthy of the name unless it was that supreme and

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irrevocable passion which is of its own nature divine, and therefore divinely pure and enduring and unselfish. But she perceived that, in the outcry of society against moral debasement and corruption, the vengeance not seldom fell with vulgar and indiscriminating severity on one who was often the victim rather than the culprit, and in the name of the Highest she cast her stainless shield upon the innocent while plunging her fiery sword into the guilty—not only those guilty in the eyes of convention, but those guilty of the greedy frivolity, the sanctimonious crookedness, the petty hypocrisies, for which her religion reserved its most scathing denunciation, the immorality not of the “sinner,” but of the Pharisee.

In that old law case recorded by the little yellow book which Browning picked up on the Florentine bookstall, he found just the weapon he wanted for a worthy continuation of her holy crusade; for the events of which he read there made up a tragedy of blood and fire upon the pages of human history. The murder was an actual murder of the most sanguinary description, the fire was that divine fire which lights the temple of humanity with a Presence more beautiful than anything that can be fully manifested under conditions of time and space.

Human love was to the Brownings no less ideal in significance than what, in our ignorance, we may assume to have been the symbolism of the sacred flaming rose, in the mystic lore of the Rosicrucians. Aurora Leigh describes that highest human love as the reflection of divine mystery,

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“ Sweet shadow-rose, upon the water of life,
Of such a mystic substance, Sharon gave
A name to! human, vital, fructuous rose,
Whose calyx holds the multitude of leaves,—
Loves filial, loves fraternal, neighbour loves,
And civic . . . all fair petals, all good scents,
All reddened, sweetened from one central
Heart ! ”

And Pompilia, when she is dying far away from the man from whom she seems to the onlooker to be hopelessly separated, knows well that in so profound a love neither death nor distance can divide, and that even in the life beyond she will feel the comfort of his hand. Neither for him nor for herself does she ask anything more of earth. It is in the face of death that she says :

“ No work begun shall ever pause for death !
Love will be helpful to me more and more
I’ the coming course, the new path I must tread,
My weak hand in thy strong hand, strong for
that !
Tell him that if I seem without him now,
That’s the world’s insight ! Oh, he under-
stands !

So let him wait God’s instant men call years ;
Meantime hold hard by truth and his great soul,
Do out the duty ! ”

Browning might well feel—and not least in those first years of his bereavement—that here indeed was the rosemary which he desired to twine about the beloved name.

MRS. BROWNING'S GRAVE

An essay necessarily limited with regard to space does not allow detailed examination of the interweaving thought and feeling which make the hidden pattern, in the very warp and woof of the two poems, such as I hope to indicate more fully elsewhere.

But the main contention of this brief article is so broad and simple as to appeal even to the proverbial "man in the street." Nowhere can it be more fittingly emblazoned than on the pages of a paper devoted to the cares and hopes of the commonalty, and to the civic interests of a great thronging city like our own.

The words of Caponsacchi's Shepherd-Judge, when speaking of himself as an ancient gardener who is talking concerning the flowers in his enclosure, the women among whom he exercised his pastoral office, may doubtless be echoed by many a twentieth-century preacher, who finds among his gay congregation a less exalted beauty of character than in some low-born injured woman, of whom, it may be, Pompilia was the prototype and forerunner, while herself the typical successor of Mrs. Browning's daring imaginative conception as embodied in Marian Erle, notwithstanding that Pompilia's motherhood had been legalised by a form of marriage, which to her childish ignorance had conveyed no meaning. Marian Erle may have been solely a puppet of the poet's brain; Pompilia was a living, breathing woman, the creation of that Master from whose hand we all must needs learn

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“Hints of the proper craft, tricks of the tool’s true play.”

Yet of both the Angel of the earthly garden might have said, as did the old Pope of Pompilia :

“Those be the plants, imbedded yonder South
To mellow in the morning, those made fat
By the master’s eye, that yield such timid leaf,
Uncertain bud, as product of his pains !
While—see how this mere chance-sown, cleft-nursed seed,
That sprang up by the wayside ’neath the foot
Of the enemy, this breaks all into blaze,
Spreads itself, one wide glory of desire
To incorporate the whole great sun it loves
From the inch-height whence it looks and longs !
my flower,
My rose, I gather for the breast of God.”

Well might Browning say of Pompilia’s history that here was a story straight to his hand, for it gave him the very sword and ring and posy wherewith in his wife’s name he might strike many a ringing blow at the social corruption which she had fought so nobly on behalf of the defenceless, a fight in which her own unsullied name and ideal love had strengthened the efficacy of her championship.

Well also might he write of her in his immortal dedication as of one “half-angel and half-bird,” who, borne aloft on the wings of divine poetry, was ever ready at the call of suffering or abasement to come down to earth

“To toil for man, to suffer or to die.”

MRS. BROWNING AS A SOCIAL REFORMER

THE vital quality of Mrs. Browning's work is the more impressive when brought with all its trenchant variety in prose and verse within the convenient compass of three small volumes. Without going so far as one of our greatest writers, who is said to have named "Aurora Leigh" as the greatest poem of the last century, it is hardly possible to doubt that Aurora, through whose lips Mrs. Browning spoke, did change, imperceptibly yet profoundly, the whole attitude of the insular English mind with regard to one social question, so that forgetfulness of the unmeasured debt which we owe to her is only an indication of its lasting reality, inasmuch as what was most courageous and amazing to her own generation now astonishes few save the ignorant or the unreasoning, and may be said to leaven all enlightened Christian ethics, whether of thought or of action.

In his characterisation of the highest womanhood as essentially differing from the highest manhood, in a royalty always shared by both and always correlative, Ruskin reminds us, in words too memorable to be either paraphrased or forgotten, that "what the woman is to be within her gates, as the centre of order, the balm of distress, and the mirror of beauty, that she is also to be without her gates, where order is more difficult, distress more imminent, loveliness more rare."

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And looking back through the Victorian age of literature on those who fulfilled this ideal in the world of letters, it is hardly possible to be altogether blind to the distinguished services rendered by the collected poems just reissued. For, in gazing closely on the nineteenth century, and especially on the middle half of the nineteenth century, amid the splendid toil and ever-fructifying harvest of those masculine forces in philosophy, in science, and in history, which by the hands of men have given to our race new powers of social economy, intellectual freedom and material wealth, while echoing Ruskin's ascription of the highest powers of knowledge and discretion to man, as the ruler, the inventor, the defender, we find a reinforcement also of his belief in woman's province as that of sovereign guidance at the very heart of life. The writings of a handful of high-minded and fearless women, among whom Mrs. Browning stood *facile princeps*, have had a primary share in the reawakening of the dormant national conscience on questions of practical religion, and have broken down those cold artificial traditions which straitened compassion and shut out the visible presence of the Master. It is true that, in this, woman did not stand alone :

“The woman's cause is man's—they rise or sink together.”

Scott and Thackeray and Dickens—to mention only three out of the many names that throng to mind—each in his several way, did much to make the ice-bound hedges less thorny in rigid

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obstructiveness. But a man would have to be either more or less than a man before he could penetrate the inmost defences of feminine vanity and self-deception with the piercing weapons and unsparing zeal of such a Britomart as Mrs. Browning. There are some subjects on which only a woman could so poignantly and unanswerably appeal to women themselves.

Mrs. Browning's stainless name and high and noble character lent an added brightness to the sword which always has "the strength of ten" for one whose "heart is pure." Moreover, her crusade was all the more powerful, and the more moving, because even the basest mind could not in her case represent it as the outcome of any personal bitterness. For her life was crowned with the "ecstasy" and

"mystery of love,
In which absorbed, loss, anguish, treason's self
Enlarges rapture."

The sanctity of marriage was to her no mere article of faith, though it was that too, but a part of

"Love, the soul of soul, within the soul,
Evolving it sublimely. First, God's love.
And next, [he smiled,] the love of wedded souls
Which still presents that mystery's counterpart."

Supremely happy in her own married love, she was overwhelmed with compassion for those who had met such anguish of treason as had never approached her own life.

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Even if Browning had not written his "Posy to the Ring," it would still not have been difficult to understand the singular appropriateness of such an offering as "The Ring and the Book" to her who had, with brave and unmistakable clearness, taught that women who stood high in their own order, for virtue and piety, were blinding themselves to the corporate responsibility of all womanhood and degrading their own protected liberty, by ignoring, with that most scathing contempt of all, which declines even to see, the ignorance, the danger, the deadening agony, of many of those who, less guarded than themselves, were yet of like flesh and blood, members of the same great human family.

Careful reading of "The Ring and the Book" will emphasise the special significance of such a votive offering to her who, crowned with ideal wifehood and rejoicing motherhood, had been the champion of women and children for her own time and for all time, and whose Marian Erle had felt as Pompilia did about her own little son, that beyond her, his mother, her child had no claimant except God. Through certain lines from "Aurora Leigh," uplifted and transfigured in "The Posy," Browning makes us feel anew, of the poet who taught and laboured through Aurora's lips, that it was in her tender ardour of service that to him she was most divine. And has she not herself reminded us that

"The man most man, with tenderest human hands,
Works best for men, as God in Nazareth"?

MRS. BROWNING SOCIAL REFORMER

"How sound of heart and clear of head," how replenished with heavenly common sense, is the best and most potent of Aurora's wisdom, and how delightful often in its salient sense of laughter as well as tears! It is difficult to choose where there is such wealth, but it is pleasant to find her hitting out squarely at one modern fashion of cant in the lines:

"Mere passion will not prove a volume worth
Its gall and rags even. Bubbles round a keel
Mean nought, excepting that the vessel moves.
There's more than passion goes to make a man
Or book."

The pungent humour is insistent everywhere, whether it be in the graphic touch which describes how certain good men drew back their chairs when they shrank away from the utterance of a coarse and unchivalrous personality,

"As if they spied black-beetles on the floor,"
or in that description of the other sort of man who
"Sets his virtues on so raised a shelf,
He has to mount a stool to get at them,
And meantime lives on quite the common way
With everybody's morals."

But there is abundant power of another kind, as in that prayer to the "Supreme Artist" for those who

"sit by solitary fires
And hear the nations praising them far off";

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or in those other lines which flash upon us the first moment of a perfect understanding between soul and soul :

“As when the sudden finger of the wind
Will wipe a row of single city-lamps
To a pure white line of flame, more luminous
Because of obliteration ; more intense,—
The intimate presence carrying in itself
Complete communication, as with souls
Who, having put the body off, perceive
Through simply being.”

Few can doubt that, although such living verse as “Cowper’s Grave” and “The Sleep” and “Confessions” will echo down the centuries in the power of a vital faith and a poet’s intensity of simple human feeling, Mrs. Browning’s most certain claim to a permanent place in English literature—a claim more certain even than that won by such poems as “A Musical Instrument” and “My Kate,” or by the throb of a world-wide patriotism in her flaming and beautiful lyrics for Italy—will rest upon those “Sonnets from the Portuguese” which never existed in any language save the language of the heart, until she wrote them and hid them away, where Browning afterwards found them and urged that the world should have the joy of them. The sonnets alone would have secured her immortality. But, had she written nothing else, notwithstanding that their intrinsic value as sonnets would have remained the same, yet without her work as a social reformer on behalf of suffering women and children, they

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would have lost an added charm as part of the expression of a noble personality. She who wrote "Aurora Leigh" and "The Cry of the Children" sowed a multiplying harvest in many widely differing fields. It would be impossible to enumerate all the unselfish battles and redeeming labours into which her spirit has crept. Through many a heart there rings ever the refrain of her words :

"Patient children—think what pain
Makes a young child patient—ponder !
Wronged too commonly to strain
After right, or wish, or wonder."

Marriage and birth and death—all were to Mrs. Browning the revelation of the Divine in the human. We think instinctively of her to whom "The Ring and the Book" was dedicated when Pompilia, whose son was born at this season, blissful in the new-born human light, kindled in the Divine Light, tells us :

"Christmas before me—was not that a chance ?
I never realised God's birth before—
How he grew likest God in being born.
This time I felt like Mary, had my babe
Lying a little on my breast like hers."

And in the name of the Divine Love, whose festival we keep, she pleads with us for every little human child to-day, most of all for every child who is grieved or injured or forgotten.

If some, who are children no longer, are sad because this Christmas there seems to be one child missing, she has a message for them also. In the

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same volume that contains "Aurora Leigh" she tells us of God :

"He lends not ; but gives to the end,
As he loves to the end. If it seem
That he draws back a gift, comprehend
'Tis to add to it rather—amend,
And finish it up to your dream.

"So look up, friends ! You, who indeed
Have possessed in your house a sweet piece
Of the Heaven which men strive for, must need
Be more earnest than others are,—speed
Where they loiter, persist where they cease."

A SONG OF NOBEL THOMSON

For a moment when the mind of the singer is at play

“*Never* mind!” or “*No* matter!” old disputants said.

Now, “mind is all matter”—“all matter is mind”—

The myriad electrons will never be dead,

For now Nobel Thomson has nobly defined

Their name, that of *corpuscles*—*well underlined*!

Altho’ the great riddle of earth be unread,

No negative answer can crush us with dread,

The old mocking “Nay” is to limbo assigned ;

The “negatives” now are with “positives” wed,

And all things are fashioned by Life, Love,
and Mind ;

For even the blankest “material” creed

Proclaims omnipresent, fulfilling our need,

The Force in our dust that has moulded
mankind,

Wrought Beauty, Truth, Goodness, for man’s
daily Bread!—

The great veil is trembling: ah, what lies
behind?

THE GLEAM

WINTER has not yet vanished, but to-day there is a foreboding of spring. The aconites are up. The woodbine leaves are unfolding their soft, delicious green. The spears of daffodil and lily-of-the-valley have already pierced the mould. Although, at this sunny noonday hour, the birds are quiet, save for a sweet twittering amid the gay tumult of the south-west wind, there have been joyous bursts of melody at evening and in the morning, and already Little Bo-peep's "lambs' tails" are hanging on the boughs of the hazel-trees. The skies are full of a strange mystic beauty—pearly bars through which the pale azure of infinite distances may at moments be seen to gleam translucently, and at other moments a nearer and more earthly brilliance, though still of the heavens, a blueness, vivid as nemophila flowers, looks laughingly. The funereal beauty of the dark pines, with their plume-like enrobing and red-brown stems, does but emphasise the light and colour of the surrounding world, the rich warmth of the ploughed fields, the peculiar fawn-like brown of last year's oak-leaves, which seem to cling to the boughs expressly to catch every passing vibration of the cool and delicate sunlight, the mossy tints of the fragrant arbor vitæ, the shining silver of the birch-stems that re-echo the silvery tints of the harmless low-lying clouds.

Already I have heard the lambs calling to their

THE GLEAM

mothers, in a field just out of sight beyond the pine-copse; and long ago the tiny buds have been showing on my youthful mountain ash that is hardly much taller than a maid of sixteen summers, a prim, yet graceful, tree, whose upward-forking branches, that still show clustered stalks where the birds have bared them of every scarlet berry, make a favourite perch for my redbreasts when they come to remind me that it is their lunch-time.

It is a day of swiftly chasing lights and shadows, a day that shows the lovely under-side of the leaves blown backward by the wind, and emphasises the amazing glossiness of the laurels—a day when it is not difficult to realise for once that we are sailing gaily through the circumambient air, with the dear old earth as our flying-boat, and all the stars for our companions. Petty cares and ambitions are put to flight. There is a moving Presence in wood and field.

“Heard melodies are sweet, but those unheard
Are sweeter,”

and on the invisible ladder, 'twixt the lower and the higher, “young angels pass.” The thoughts of the young poet and the old intermingle—the thought of Keats, who gave us the famous line about music that is “unheard” in the sense in which God is unseen, and the thought of Tennyson, who in his last years wrote, in his perfect lyric of the spring, those childlike and beautiful words about the “young angels” that ascend and descend amid the unfolding ecstasy. It is a day

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when the "Gleam" of which Tennyson sang enters many a heart, that does not know itself for a poet, yet arises to "follow the Gleam"—at once tranquillised and inspirited by the touch of some infinite possibility beyond the credence of the mere senses, a possibility of which Beauty, Truth, and Love are but differing aspects—a day when in many a soul there wakes, however dumbly, something of the fine courage that breathes through the verses of that later poet who has written :

"I will not doubt, though all my ships at sea
Come drifting home with broken masts and
sails ;
I shall believe the Hand that never fails,
From seeming evil worketh good for me ;
And though I weep because those sails are
battered,
Still will I cry, while my best hopes lie shattered,
'I trust in Thee.'

"I will not doubt ; well anchored in the faith,
Like some staunch ship, my soul braves every
gale ;
So strong its courage that it will not fail
To breast the mighty unknown sea of Death.
Oh, may I cry, when body parts with spirit,
'I do not doubt,' so listening worlds may hear it,
With my last breath."

A FRAGMENT

WAS it of love or of spring-time that Caponsacchi was speaking when he said :

“I paced the city : it was the first Spring.

By the invasion I lay passive to,

In rushed new things, the old were rapt away” ?

He had just seen Pompilia, the woman whose noble simplicity and purity were to be among the regenerating forces which awakened him to the fact that he had been a “fribble” and “coxcomb” ; but it is with a quite literal meaning also that he tells us that “it was the new Spring.”

Love and spring-time—what new thing can be said of either, except that the eternal parable is rewritten every Easter, sealed with the profound significance of the most joyous fact in the world’s history, and prophesying “some far-off divine event,” in which shall be consummated that deepest and purest love of all, which is, we are told, even more enduring than faith and hope ?

Once again the earth is putting forth her symbols and unfolding her beautiful hieroglyph, not only in field and lane and woodland, but even in the byways and corners of town and city. Already the rosy splendour of the almond-trees has glowed and paled again, and the leafless elms have shown their clusters of dusky red blossoms, and now I have seen one of them opening its green buds. Lilacs are rapidly unfolding their leaves,

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and here and there the hawthorns are showing a bright verdure.

In London the spring must always carry with it a certain charm of surprise and incongruity. The exquisite cleanness of the new leaves and flowers, the stainless splendour of the vernal tints, the exhilarating purity of the early perfumes—who would look for these in the midst of so much smoke and grime, so much that is sordid, or worldly, or poverty-stricken? Yet here they are, unsullied as an angel's wing and sweet as the airs of heaven. Already I have seen the loveliness of the budding trees at the back of the Marylebone Workhouse; already, after an early shower, I have met the penetrating and delicious odour of the sweet-poplar in St. James's Square—so unmistakable a fragrance that, though I have not discovered the tree, which may be hiding in a back garden or round an area corner, I know that it is there, as we know the sun is shining when we feel the light in our eyes. There are sheltered bits in Kensington Gardens which are already “a mist of green, and nothing perfect,” and the little blue scyllas seem to be blooming this year even more fully than usual in outlying garden plots. As I stood last Sunday morning in St. Paul's Churchyard, watching the crowd of pigeons that walked about tamely and companionably round the feet of the children who were feeding them, I saw that the crocuses were at their most perfect moment of blooming, and recalled a charming letter from Mr. G. D. Leslie to his friend Mr. Marks, in which he evolves a theory of his own as to why the

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gold crocus is generally smaller than the purple or the white.

I know of one town in the Midlands, full of hot and noisy factories, where, at this time of year, the little windows of the back streets in the slums used to be adorned with glasses of the purple crocus, plucked by the eager flower-loving factory "hands" and their children, down in the flat meadows by the winding Trent. In those fields, in bygone days, the wild anemone, which generally is found in the woods, was wont to grow with a special grace and vigour, the witchery of its delicate outline enhanced by the deeper pink in its pencillings, which it owed probably to the lavish moisture.

Here in the south only the plane-tree, our London tree *par excellence*, still remains bare, except for the three little fairy-like balls of last year, which hang here and there from the branches, and mark it out almost as distinctively as the peeling of the bark. On the north side of London the coltsfoot is in full bloom, and I have seen it also in Kent, where the earliest fruit trees are beginning to be snowy. The grey and gold of the sunset on Sunday evening was hardly more beautiful than the later sky which followed, when the moon and stars looked down through fleecy clouds and far-away azure deeps. And there has been more than one afternoon since, when the Law Courts and National Gallery, in the very heart of our great thoroughfares, have gloomed forth grandly against a pale gold background, touched with diaphanous cloud-ripples.

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London owes much of its supreme fascination to the river and to the birds which fly above it. Sea-gulls and swallows are among the most beautiful birds in the world, and there are a host of others that, when the swallows are here with the May-time, will be sharing London festivities with them. It is wonderful how many singing-birds seem to make themselves happy in suburban gardens. But it was further afield that I this year heard the skylark most jubilant, some three weeks ago, beyond Eltham, one sunny, windy morning, when I watched two English girls on horseback taking their ditches very prettily, in company with a young brother, whose horse at first refused to follow for all the urging in the world. The lark was pouring forth his "harmonious madness" above a bit of grass-land, such as may often be found just outside London. It is surprising what a variety of field and woodland and wild, blossomy common, surround this huge, struggling city. We owe much to those hard-working enthusiasts who have secured to us open spaces within our borders, and turned ill-kempt burial-grounds into cheering gardens. It is a moment when every one wishes success to the hard-worked people who are doing their best to save the glories of tree and moorland from the hand of the artificial spoiler.

Among London schemes which appeal to all hearts alike, apart from party prejudice or theological wrangling, there are two or three which seem to make a stronger appeal than usual in these first days of sunshine and fresh air. There is the

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delightful enterprise lately set on foot for securing to outworn labouring women, and especially mothers, an occasional breath of sunshine and sweet air before they break down under the perpetual strain of their daily burden. Not to speak of the Children's Country Holidays Fund, which every one knows and delights in, and the State Children's Aid, which has done so much to give our State children a more natural environment than was possible in the old barrack schools, there is the Children's Invalid Aid Association, which seeks to give to every crippled child in London a helpful and understanding friend, and yearly does so much in arranging for needed rest and change in convalescent homes. On the children of the nation depends the future of the race, and nothing must be allowed to rob them of that precious vitality and enjoyment of life which make sunshine doubly welcome and spring-time an added joy.*

The beauty of London in the spring-time is at all times the more poignant from its mingling of the infinite and the impossible, its conflict between the lavish blossoming of Nature and the straitening greed of man; but, if the ideal of civic responsibility fulfil the promise which has been slowly and gradually unfolding for more than

* The addresses to which helpers and sympathisers may write are: Children's Invalid Aid, 13 Buckingham Street; Women's Holiday Fund, 47 St. James's Square; Children's Country Holidays Fund, 18 Buckingham Street, Strand; State Children's Aid Association, 61 Old Broad Street, E.C. "Omnia vincit amor" is the motto of the Children's Invalid Aid Association.

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nineteen hundred years on behalf of the poor and the sorrowful, then, century by century, the world may draw nearer to that spring-time of the Golden Year when at last there will be written upon the walls of our cities: "Omnia vincit amor."

THE OXFORD PAGEANT AND RUSKIN HALL

I AM tempted to quote from the prologue to the published "Scheme of the Oxford Historical Pageant," which begins as follows :

"It is no long time now to the unfolding of one of the most beautiful and stately scenes that Oxford has seen for many a long day. The latter days of June and the earlier days of July will witness such a wealth of historical renaissance and such a pomp of picturesque ceremonial as cannot fail to add new and wonderful charm even to a city which has already so many potent spells within the circle of her dreaming spires. She has gazed calm-eyed on many a gallant scene, this ancient mother of men ; she has watched the deeds of kings and nobles, bishops and warriors, courtiers and academics ; she has seen them carried to their triumphs and to their graves. And now she has cast about in the dim recesses of her memory and bethought her of the brave companies that she has viewed of old ; and here, amid the fair lawns and streams, she will set forth, brilliant and unclouded as when they first met her gaze, the noblest memories of a thousand years."

To those of us who are not among the fortunate crowd privileged to be present at this pageant, Oxford is nevertheless always, and through all the

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changing seasons, full of pageantry and the glamour of historic memories. Now, as at all times, youth and music fill the ancient chapels with their joy ; eager young spirits, in whom mind and body seem fitly mated, throng the pavements, hold comradeship in the gardens, weave new and everlasting memories, lay quick, persistent fingers upon the doorways of knowledge, urging the well-worn keys in the old locks, and, in rare moments of intimate talk or unspoken companionship, looking through the eyes of some fellow-wayfarer into that "Glory of God" that makes manhood, behold for an instant the unspeakable Wisdom, veiled and mysterious, yet radiating a power and purity beyond all written words.

Dull must he be of heart who could pass by unmoved the continual procession of unfolding life and destiny, in this centre of immemorial tradition and unresting development, this city of unconscious paradox and sacramental heritage, where the very old and the very new are so mysteriously at one, and the outward ritual of education, bracing and uplifting though it be, is instinct with an eternal grace that overleaps, and creates to ever new vicissitudes, the ideal it embodies.

This wide bay-window in a tutorial house where these jottings are written down, looking out on tower and dome and spire, with a foreground of delicious greenery and old-world garden, is all a part of the educational hospitality and ordered life, that help to give poise and recollectedness to the lives that pass through the gateways of this

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majestic University; but even more moving in its symbolism was that rough, bare room, now yearly coming into closer touch with the University, where a day or two ago I talked with some of the fifty residents of Ruskin Hall, twenty of them miners who will later return to their mining work—men who win intellectual luxury through physical deprivation, and to whom “plain living and high thinking” are alike a passion and a necessity. Spirited, independent, earnest, some of them are said to be among the best debaters at the Union, and on one and another of the faces it is impossible to mistake the intellectual distinction, or that still higher distinction of character, that transcends and turns to scorn all those mere externals and trapperies of life which Teufelsdröckh characterised as “clothes.”

Ruskin Hall has wide-reaching Imperial possibilities, and the national potentialities of its modest beginnings are indicated by the fact that 95,000 working men, members of the Amalgamated Society of Engineers, have made four levies of one penny each to help the work of the college. Of the amount (£300) produced by the first levy, which was made in 1903, £250 was devoted to the fund for purchasing the present buildings, and with the remaining £50 one of their fellow-members was in residence at the college for the whole of the year 1903. £150 of the amount provided by the second levy went to the fund for the new buildings, and with the remaining £150 three of their fellow-members came into residence for the whole of 1904. By

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their third levy six of their fellow-members were at the college for the whole of 1905. By their fourth levy nine of their fellow-members are at the college for the whole of this year.*

My first vision of Oxford, more than a quarter of a century ago, was a dreamland of all that is most perfect in youthful friendship and human fellowship; of days when among those who took part in that charmed circle through which for a few fleeting days I passed spellbound, were men who have since taken a distinguished part in the service of their compatriots overseas as well as nearer home, but who had then scarcely closed their University career, of whom indeed the impression given was that of thinkers rather than men of action, though doubtless those who knew more intimately the "iron will" and untiring executive ability on which their fellows would lean in a great crisis, may in one instance have understood, better than a passing visitor, the force behind that simplicity and charm. Others there were also—a brilliant group of friends and comrades, just about to leave their undergraduate days behind them and bid farewell to Balliol and to Oxford—who as scholars and men of letters and helpers of the poor, have more than fulfilled the promise of those days, and have through life been loyal to those old attachments. Among their seniors, the men whose widely differing influences most potently converged, in this particular coterie, to make life a disciplined art from which nothing

* These statistics were taken *verbatim* from the report published in the year of the Oxford Pageant.

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intrinsically high or beautiful should be absent—Jowett, T. H. Green, Lewis Nettleship, Walter Pater, Arnold Toynbee—have all passed beyond our mortal vision, though they have left their mark enduringly in many a noble life. It is possible that among these influences, Arnold Toynbee's may have been deepest of all. But it must not be forgotten that Clough's Oxford pamphlet on Retrenchment had preceded Toynbee's work and that of Leonard Montefiore in paths that led straight towards the movement of which Ruskin Hall is one manifestation among many, long before the days of the actual road-mending by Ruskin's followers.

Clough was known to that generation chiefly through his poems, but in "that serene, that earnest air," which alternated with a very pretty wit and went hand in hand with old-world courtesy and charm, at many an undergraduate breakfast table and supper party, the good tradition remained, quickened and deepened doubtless by the present and living influence of Arnold Toynbee and the men and women who admired and loved him.

It is only in looking back that I realise how those days were making the future of to-day. At the moment the pageant of life and spring caught the hours in their uplifting whirl, and, though much was felt and divined, the outward eyes were too much dazzled to see clearly or remember fully.

It was a wondrous May-time on the edge of June, when the days were all one long succession of

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eager conversation and stimulating companionship, and "the Master"—who was Jowett in those days—flitted rosy-cheeked and smiling through those fragrant gardens, all sweet with syringa and lilac and may, where we spent such moments as were not engrossed with chapels and breakfast parties and cloistered wanderings through ever-new delights of sunshine and conversation.

To-day the place is full of thoughts and memories and hopes, and that glamour of delicious sunlight which comes next to health and youth and love in its vitalising joy. If I have dwelt for a moment on the pathos and the promise of those rough, brave lives at Ruskin Hall, I do not forget that the faery background, which, year by year, is woven by new generations of those who come here drinking deeply of all the best that wealth and culture can give, is to those very lives an influence and a romance which, if rightly used, may be a part of Oxford's gifts to them. With a faith that approaches certainty, I look to the successors of Arthur Hugh Clough and the group that followed him, and to the sane generosity of all great literature, to achieve in time, for those born into a straitened heritage, a less stinted measure for their cup of intellectual joy, their share in the beauty and uplifting of our common lot. For these last, during their brief sojourn at Ruskin Hall, each day may bring its own pageantry, whether they be present at the Historical Pageant or not.

Having begun with the opening words in what may be called the prologue to the book of the

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Pageant, it may be worth while to add a quotation from "Q's" final paragraph in what may not unfittingly be named its epilogue:

"I say confidently, therefore, that the Historical Pageant of 1907 can never divulge the secret of Oxford. It may do better, though. Merely by being youthful, ardent, gay . . . it may pass into the secret itself and be of a piece with it.

"'Tower tall, city wall,
A river running past;
Youth played when each was made,
And shall them all outlast.'"

That is a verse of enchantment; but finer still, perhaps, is the closing stanza of "An Invitation to the Pageant," by Robert Bridges:

"Farewell! for whether we be young or old,
Thou dost remain, but we shall pass away;
Time shall against himself thy house uphold,
And build thy sanctuary from decay;
Children unborn shall be thy pride and stay.
May earth protect thee, and thy sons be true,
And God with heavenly food thy life renew,
Thy pleasure and thy grace from day to day."

NOTE ON "SILAS MARNER" FROM THE TEMPLE CLASSICS

[Included here by the courtesy of the publishers.]

ASSOCIATIONS are "chancey" and unreasoning things. I seldom find myself thinking of "Silas Marner" without hearing a line of Browning with which it has no definite or obvious relation, a line which even now is murmuring, with a steady and unexpected claim upon attention :

"One star, its chrysolite——"

So haunting and insistent is this caprice of memory that it seems impossible to write even the briefest "appreciation" of the book without finding it somewhere upon the page.

Is it that in this long-ago story there is a flawless and crystalline unity, as pure and illuminating as it is convincing, and touching the recollection with that same sense of divinity in everyday things which is felt sometimes in the coming of the stars at evening or the quivering music of the aspen-leaves at noon ?

Certain it is that we find in this homely tale a quaint humour, a tender religious charm, which Mrs. Ewing in after-days might rival, in her own very different and much more limited field, but which even she could hardly surpass, and of which Thackeray himself—to name no other—might have been justly and modestly proud. There

NOTE ON *SILAS MARNER*

may well be a lifting of eyebrows at the juxtaposition of Thackeray's name in such a comparison. Yet for true and intimate seriousness in the primal relations of life the great satirist had a master-touch, and, while he differed from George Eliot as widely as each differed from their contemporary, the great humourist who gave us "Oliver Twist," there was in both—in him who wrote "Philip" and "Esmond" and "The Newcomes," no less than in the creator of Dinah Morris—a gentleness of heart, a generous amplitude of nature, a sanity and fine restraint, which made it impossible to treat either their ethical ideals, or their spirit of worship and of faith, with any touch of mockery or of disrespect. Perhaps it would be difficult to find any two novels, both, like "Silas Marner" and "Vanity Fair," representing life in England at the beginning of the nineteenth century, which differ more than do these two works of fiction, in material and in method; but both embody powerfully one part at least of the meaning of that great seventeenth-century allegory from which "Vanity Fair" took its name. And in this story of peasant life it is driven home, with a perfection of masterly self-effacement, worthy of those immortal lines of George Meredith in praise of the music that is

"free
Of taint of personality."

Full of sunshine and of neighbourly love, yet enfolding at the outset the tragedy of a soul which has lost faith in God and man, it evolves,

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unswervingly and inextricably, that far-reaching discipline of life and self-created retribution, which elude the crude methods and coarse reckoning of the time-server and the hypocrite. It faces wrongs and inequalities which might well fill even the strongest with despair, were it not for that Power, whose Love and Guidance, full of sympathy with ordained renunciation, Dolly Winthrop believed men ought to "trusten" through all the perplexity of what, to a gross and limited perception, so often looks like purposeless and inequitable sacrifice. Dolly's unconscious philosophy is wide enough and deep enough to support the whole burden of our earthly mystery. It is through her unlettered wisdom that the weaver's mournful early story and ever-mellowing happiness of later life are beheld, in that clearly mirrored divine radiance which exalts and purifies human drama, whether of tragedy or comedy. And it is not men and women alone who live and move before us in that wondrous light. What is it that enables George Eliot by a few brief, sober touches to evoke with such extraordinary vividness, not only certain features of the landscape, but the very spirit that breathes through them? Is it that, in her long country drives with her father, these English lanes and hedgerows, these quiet pools and silvery "runlets" and deep, delicious meadows, gave to her some effluence of their very being, such as enabled her to write of them ever afterwards with the delicate reserve and divining magnetism of a lifelong love? It is, for instance, no mere

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description which enchants us in that singularly beautiful passage in which she speaks of "a certain awe . . . such as we feel before some quiet majesty or beauty in the earth or sky—before a steady glowing planet, or a full-flowered eglantine, or the bending trees over a silent pathway."

With no forgetfulness of her reluctant surrender of the ancient creed, it must yet be maintained that George Eliot was at once too rational and too religious—too humbly and exaltedly conscientious in every task she undertook—to have anything to do with that pseudo-romance of over-strained fancy, against which our modern "laughing philosopher" of a later generation—serious and ardent under his ironical mask—is for ever running a-tilt. The naturalness and inevitableness of that often-quoted scene at the Rainbow, in which slow bovine vanity and sheer ineptitude so nearly lead to a quarrel, give to the villagers there a fitting niche beside the classic Dogberry. The humour of that scene—as indeed of the whole book—"too animate to need a stress"—is as different as possible from the self-conscious epigrammatic sparkle of many later imitative scenes among nineteenth-century novels of agricultural life.

The weaver himself is a triumph of delicate insight on the part of the author—a triumph the more subtle because his character is built on such apparently simple lines. He for whose hoarded gold is substituted a better treasure in his golden-haired foster-daughter, touches us with

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the same deep affection as that forsaken father—described by Balzac as of much the same period of time, though of another country—who was never a miser except of the looks and words of his cruel children, and to whom, in his torture-chamber of gallant self-deception, there came no heavenly deliverance except the deliverance of death. Was there in Marner's admirably chosen name any half-conscious reminiscence of another earthly voyager whose way to "the dear God who loveth us" lay through a hell of isolation—that ancient "Mariner" whose title only differs from his own by the interposition of a single letter? This poor hungry-hearted craftsman had learned very early that "the wedding feast" at life's table is not for all in this world; and though, unlike the weird sailor in Coleridge's poem, he had never willingly injured one of God's creatures—it was they who had injured *him*—yet it seemed that for long he must needs meet the waves of a buffeting adversity, with almost as deep a solitariness of soul as he who cried

"This soul hath been
Alone on a wide wide sea :
So lonely 'twas, that God himself
Scarce seemèd there to be."

He, too, is won back to fellowship divine and human by the "beauty" and the "happiness" of one of the "happy living things" about his path, though to him—as well he deserved—came a messenger lovelier and more loving than the little water-snakes of whom the "Ancient Mariner"

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told "the Wedding Guest" that he "blessed them unaware."

There came a day when he too, he, Silas Marner, who had seemed shut out from that conscious presence of Love which of itself is heaven, as he looked into the eyes of a little laughing child, could feel vaguely and inarticulately something of what Swinburne's exquisitely simple lines have made articulate for all men everywhere concerning children :

"Earth's creeds may be seventy times seven
And blood have defiled each creed :
If of such be the kingdom of heaven,
It must be heaven indeed."

But with what an ideal realism—in the true, not the modern and debased, use of the word—does the incessant interaction of character and circumstance, with its gradual unforeseen development and self-recording Nemesis, unfold itself! As one vindication of the sense in which the word "realism" has just been used, take, for example, the inimitable drawing of Mr. Macey, always such an entirely credible human creature, even when he contrives to interpolate in his well-intended condolences with Marner the gratifying information that "you were allays a staring white-faced creatur, partly like a bald-faced calf!"

Or consider the character of Nancy Lammeter. Her portrait is touched in with a precision, a dainty care and individuality of colouring, that impress themselves vividly on the memory. Her singularly limited ideal would in any less beautiful soul have

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been written down as narrowness. Her rectitude of purpose, in details of conduct in which she was as determined as she was mistaken, would in a smaller nature have been hated as obstinacy. But, although George Eliot does not conceal these characteristics, Nancy's exquisite sincerity of intention, "clear as the flower-born dew," her self-forgetting steadfastness of affection, have been portrayed also, with such a faultless reality as to make her primness a part of her fascination, and her "set ways" as restful as the conventionalised blossom-line of some perfect bit of decorative art. Rarely does George Eliot permit herself, in relation to any of her *dramatis personæ*, the use of that hard-worked and sometimes meaningless adjective "sweet"; but to Nancy's name she does prefix it; and, indeed, this daughter of a farming squire calls up to the reader the image of those starry pheasant-eyed flowers, sheeny in their snow-white, stainless exactitude, and fragrant with a message beyond that of earth, to which the Lancashire folk give Nancy Lammeter's "christen" name. Of her, as of Mrs. Gaskell's last and most perfect achievement, Molly Gibson, we think, as among the people we have known, rather than those of whom we have merely read.

But even Nancy, whose life is nobly in accord with her belief that nothing in this world is "worth doing wrong for," does not touch a deeper or a higher note than Dolly Winthrop. And Dolly's is in some ways a larger mind, notwithstanding she was "no scholar," and a nature touched with that best kind of sainthood

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which lies, not in the negative virtues—virtues which in such a life spring up of themselves—but in the cleansing drudgery of ever-repeated and ever-chosen toil, for the world's humblest, coarsest needs. Dolly lives so entirely in the joys and sorrows of others, that to her the whole community is a family needing her maternal care. Was there ever, even in Mrs. Poyser herself, a more delightful creation than this excellent woman, who, as mild and patient as she was hard-working, viewed “the stronger sex in the light of animals whom it had pleased Heaven to make naturally troublesome, like bulls and turkey-cocks”? It is like feeling the sunshine only to think of her; “good-looking, fresh-complexioned,” and “never whimpering,” and, when she was not tending her jovial husband, or “that apple-cheeked youngster of seven, with a clean-starched frill that looked like a plate for the apples,” never so happy as when she stood by a sick-bed, or gave kindly help in a house of mourning!

Besides, it is Dolly, with her practical faith and pagan phrasing, who brings Marner the first spoken word of comfort from what she calls “the right quarter,” and reminds us that “if we’n done our part it isn’t to be believed as Them as are above us’ll be worse nor we are, and come short o’ Their’n.” More characteristic still is that later saying of hers: “It’s the will o’ Them above as a many things should be dark to us; but there’s some things as I’ve never felt i’ the dark about, and they’re mostly what comes i’ the day’s work.” Perhaps we love her most for her delicate tact and

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magnanimity in that surpassing scene in which Silas, "leaning forward to look at Baby with some jealousy, as she was resting her head backward against Dolly's arm, and eyeing him contentedly from a distance"—made his little confession of jealousy—"But I want to do things for it myself, else it may get fond o' somebody else, and not fond o' me."

In this, as in all her novels, it is in her wonderful mother-hearted touches in relation to the children that George Eliot's inspiration is most striking of all. Eppie, when she blossoms into womanhood, is as real and as "taking" as a briar-rose, one of those "dillicate-made" flowers, with their ineffable perfume, as of sweetness wafted from far away, which, with their heart-shaped petals, and colouring of sunset cloudlets, grow by thousands in the dusty lanes, to transfigure with their unconscious symbolism—at once ethereal and earthly—the possibilities of man's homeliest lot. But it is in the pictures of Eppie's childhood that the novelist attains her highest distinction. What could be more absolutely perfect in irresistible humour than the story of the "toal-hole" discipline, with its atmosphere of tender and growing love between the lonely old man and the little wayward, winsome child. Other writers have given us children to love and to remember, in whom there is often an element of the subtle or the exceptional, but I venture to think that the main attraction of George Eliot's children—and herein lies her greatness—is in a kind of divine commonplaceness, as of daisies and buttercups. And

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in the music that their voices make—such music as brings comfort and strength to many lonely hearts—there is not one false or self-conscious note. To draw such children as that is only possible to the highest genius of all. And they are, as they should be, just taken for granted, as are all the divinest things in life—never insisted upon, never “shown off,” or dragged in. “In old days,” as the author of “*Silas Marner*,” reminds us, “there were angels who came and took men by the hand and led them away from the city of destruction. We see no white-winged angels now. But yet men are led away from threatening destruction: a hand is put into theirs, which leads them forth gently towards a calm and bright land, so that they look no more backward; and the hand may be a little child’s.”

THE PROFFERED SHIPS

WHY do they thrill us—those ships that we dream
about,

Ships they will build us, far over the sea,
Ships that all fill us with welcomes that gleam
about

Timber and shrouding with noble elation,
Ships from each stalwart self-governing nation
Born of our Mother and born to be free?—

See them come floating, majestic and glorious,
Dreams that for beauty and strength are
delight—

Comrades devoting young sinews victorious,
Sister to sister and brother to brother,
One in the love of the Homeland, the Mother,
One in the justice immortal in might!—

Not for the passion of warfare and vanity,
But for the Kinship that cannot forget—
Love that can fashion the bonds of humanity
Into the grace of an armour celestial,
Love that uplifts out of all that is bestial,
Love, whereon light, tho' it rise, cannot
set!—

Brothers, the Homeland is proud at the thought
of you,
Hearts overflow to your generous words;

THE PROFFERED SHIPS

Heaven is the dome to the temple that's wrought
of you,
Arching the hearth that, in world-wide embrace
of you,
Glow with the courage and champion grace of
you !
Send us your ships then—bright messenger
birds !

Oh, may the God of our fathers bestow on us
Disciplined peace, without panic or strife !
But, should the rod of His chastisement throw
on us
Duties of war on behalf of the trampled,
May we, with oneness and strength unexampled,
Fight to the death for the Master of Life !

Dear far-off lands, our own ships will respond to
you ;
We will be loyal and true to our trust—
Pledge we our bond thro' this life and beyond to
you,
Forge we our way thro' a tempest's commotion,
Ride we at ease on a billowless ocean,
Stand to attention, or crimson the dust !

IN MID-MAY'S GLORY

SUMMER in May! The buttercups are here and the sorrels have begun to redden. The fragile stellarias along the lane's edge are beginning to pass away, and the loveliest of the pale blue speedwells are laughing through the dewy grass in many a meadow as the sun goes down. The white Montana with a grace of the angels is clambering over porches and sunny walls, and the broom—yellow and white and primrose-coloured—overlooking dazzling beds of pansies, neighbours the sweet golden azaleas, in a garden where one who loves Switzerland and Italy has now deep blue gentians in full bloom. Hawthorns are out, the Spanish chestnuts are in full leaf, and the old-fashioned ribbongrass and forget-me-nots in the cottage borders are in their glory. The buds of pinks and carnations are still closed, but white butterflies are sporting with one another and with the flowers, and yesterday a queen-bee sailed into my front sitting-room—almost as unexpected an apparition as the big tropical-looking moth, with gorgeous torn wings, that I once found lying dead outside one cottage porch not far away, or the little grass-adder, a pretty creature, 28 inches long, that last year glided past our kitchen door, charming a little robin as it went, and met its death at the hand of a neighbour before we learned how harmless it was. Thus do I add to my country experiences. Little fluffy rabbits I have

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seen in many a bygone year, scuttling across our woodland paths, but not till yesterday had I watched the swift, graceful movements of a tiny field-mouse, running swift as a lizard through the undergrowth. Or was it some other creature whose little lithe body I mistook for his? Wistaria in lavish blossoming has succeeded red and pink japonica, and the pungent smell of the ribes is already over, though there is a little plant akin to the borage, now full of deep blue jewel-like blossoms, in careful gardens. The swallows are flying low, as if they expected yet more rain; but the finches are full of music, and the nightingales most melodious. I have not yet happened to hear the call of the owls, though the cuckoo seems to mark the refrain of the whole blossoming world, that is full of the scent of the lilacs and of the beautiful pheasant-eyed narcissus. Even the lilies-of-the-valley are in bloom, and the yellow banksia. What a wondrous county this is, and how deeply it was beloved by its own great poet and novelist who died here twelve months ago!

It is just a year since the ashes of George Meredith were laid to rest, the flames having burned to utmost purity the beautiful, outworn garment he had laid aside. Do not his words breathe along the meadow and the woodland in the sweet south wind of our enchanting Surrey wilds?

“ And song of England’s rush of flowers
Is this full breeze with mellow stops,
That spins the lark for shine, for showers ;

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He drinks his hurried flight, and drops.
The stir in memory seem these things,
Which out of moisten'd turf and clay,
Astrain for light push patient rings,
Or leap to find the waterway.

So hard was earth an eyewink back ;
But now the common life has come,
The blotting cloud a dappled pack,
The grasses one vast underhum.

A burly joy each creature swells
With sound of its own hungry quest :
Earth has to fill her empty wells,
And speed the service of the nest."

INTRODUCTION TO "SAYINGS FROM THE SAINTS"

*[Reprinted here by the kind permission of the publisher,
Mr. Eveleigh Nash.]*

THIS little book is dedicated to one who gave, and doubtless made doubly sacred by thoughts that were prayers, a rosary made of shells from the Bay of Salamis, which from Athens reached a shy child of nine some forty-six years ago, in memory of a meeting that was also a parting. It asks no higher privilege than to be just such a gift from heart to heart, a rosary in which the beads are of God's making, gathered and polished by other hands than those that have sought to string them on the enduring, yet invisible, thread of human friendship and love. Friendship and love whereof the Saints in this volume have written as the gift and the revelation of Him to whom with one accord they cry: "Thou hast made us for Thyself, and our hearts are restless till they rest in Thee."

From hand to hand and from heart to heart, as a parting gift, a salutation on birthdays and festivals, it asks a place in life to uplift and help in those moments of meditation that come sometimes unforeseen as well as of set purpose, and offers up a many-voiced harmony of that praise which all the saints utter, "not only with their lips, but with their lives," a harmony attuned to one triumphant note, through all diversity,

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in its catholicity of Truth and Wisdom and Love.

The stringing of beads is the humblest of offices in the making of a beautiful thing, yet only under orders could so unscholarly a hand have been dipped into the treasury of the ages to find what was needed for the fashioning of this memorial, and it is well that he who set me this lowly but illuminating task restricted me to the sayings of saints within the canon, for otherwise, with freedom to quote from the words of all good men and women, the choice would have been too vast, and I might have been still groping helplessly among half-dug mines. Nevertheless, the magnificent and practical testimony, of those whose sayings are transcribed in this book, does but gain in weight and in cogency from the sense of that surrounding multitude of uncanonised saints whose thoughts are seldom recorded, except in obscure and unselfish deeds, and in that Book of Life where the last shall be first—men and women who for the sake of others have drudged heroically and suffered silently and rejoiced evermore, and whose messages, though scarcely heard in the fields of literature, are vocal in the invisible choir.

At the suggestion of the same wise taskmaster, I have so intermingled the jewels on my rosary that the greatest and clearest are therein supported by the lesser gems; and the sayings of no saint, however great, can be found on many continuous pages unsurrounded by those of others. Here and there some glorious passage that cannot be broken is left supreme and uninterrupted. But wherever it

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is possible, the wisdom of one is complemented or echoed by another and yet another, leading as by a natural transition to a new aspect of the same truth, or to some apparently opposite view which is its safeguard or its culmination, in the mighty paradox of that wider truth which includes both.

If it be objected that such interwoven fragments can never make a book properly so called, I reply that it matters little what it is named, whether day-book or rosary or sacred patchwork, so long as it serve its purpose for wholesome invigoration in daily care and toil, holy comfort and courage in hours of darkness, a burnishing of the soul's armour for mortal combat, and an assurance of that communion of spirit with spirit which is found in Him who is the All-embracing and the Eternal.

With regard to the limitations laid upon me, I have been rigidly obedient ; even the writer of the "Imitation" has not been included, nor the recluse of Norwich, since neither of them appears in the Calendar. Herein also has been gain, for we all love Thomas à Kempis already ; and had I been allowed to quote at will from the "Imitation," the austerity of an ideal wholly personal and contemplative might have dimmed the almost dazzling testimony of the canonised saints, whose many-sided activity and inspired common sense are only equalled by the heights of their mystic communion and the profundity and universality of their love. While they recognised, as the Catholic Church has always recognised, those ever-present gifts of healing and of miracle which have been neglected,

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forgotten, disused, their essential ideal is not the negation of emotion, any more than the "pure light unbroken by the prism" is devoid of those qualities which, when it meets the refracting edges of grief and discipline and renunciation, break forth in all the glories of the prismatic colours from seraphic red to deep celestial blue. Less familiar, and therefore more stimulating to devotional exercise than even many of the tender and love-inspiring passages of the "Imitation," is that splendid saying of St. Teresa, that it mattered comparatively little whether her soul was carried to hell or to heaven, since, wherever she went, the Supreme Good was present; and the assurance of St. Francis that "all we perceive materially in this world of the Most High is the Body and Blood of our Divine Lord, and the mysterious words by which we were created and redeemed."

Amid the agony of a creation that "groaneth and travaileth" toward diviner perfection, where the Faith is still blasphemed by the horrors perpetrated in its most holy name, there are problems which embrace much that is beyond the reach of our finite Reason, even though we are taught to use its light as the light of God. Yet even now we learn, through what is most enduring in human affection and human loyalty, that the transitory is but a mode of the Eternal, and the words education and redemption, which are too often used chiefly as controversial weapons, are symbols of infinite suggestiveness and unutterable consolation.

The "Sayings" here recorded are untainted by a danger which lurks in the latest revival of that

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ancient mystical heresy which is to some of us the more ensnaring from the intermingling of vital truth whereby it lives. Possibly that heresy is never a more dividing influence in its self-centred quietism than when, asserting that we are the Universe, and essentially the God to whom we pray, it reckons up righteousness by success and virtue by freedom from pain.

The saints here quoted, though on many subjects they use the very language and share the very thoughts of the modern mystics, to a degree that is almost startling, yet on this question divide from them in a manner equally striking. St. Teresa, St. Augustine, and St. Francis, and all their blessed company, never said "we do not suffer"; but, while they valued joy and health as divine gifts, they welcomed, as the highest privilege, their share in the wounding and the battle, whereby Love sacrifices what is dearest for the uplifting of others, even though they accounted all the anguish as nothing in the presence of the Glory that is Eternal, that Glory which is but another name for unconquerable Truth, invincible Beauty, undying Love—the Divine Love that for them is the First and Last of all things, round about whose throne the rainbow is unbroken. And because the great Reality is beyond the power of mortal utterance, their words are less arrogant than the simpler and shallower assertions of those modern opinions which think to have solved all mysteries by maintaining what is, after all, but a small part of the complexities of truth.

Longing passionately not only for a united Christendom, but for the day when the East and the West

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shall join hands in the one worship to which both through the centuries have brought such ineffable foreshadowings, there is much here to remind us, amid those transcendental treasures of the Orient which have of late been thrown open to the world, that while out of the East came all the mystic lore of India, out of the East also came "the deathless legacy of Isaiah and the practical mysticism of that apostle who wrote of the Divine One that 'in Him we live and move and have our being.'"

THE LADY OF THE LAKE

“THE Lady of the Lake” was first published in 1810, and in his introduction to the edition of 1830—twenty years later—Scott tells us how “this poem, the action of which lay among scenes so beautiful and so deeply imprinted on” his “recollections, was a labour of love, and it was no less so to recall the manners and incidents introduced. The frequent custom of James IV., and particularly of James V., to walk through their kingdom in disguise, afforded” him, he adds, “the hint of an incident, which never fails to be interesting if managed with the slightest address or dexterity.” Every autumn for many years Scott was in the habit of spending some time in that “romantic country” where the plot unfolds itself—country of which he had read and seen much, but heard traditionally even more—and, indeed, it is not difficult to divine that this stirring and beautiful romance was interwoven with the very texture of his earlier life. “Oddly enough,” as he himself remarked, “it was in all the dignity of danger, with a front and rear guard, and loaded arms,” that he first entered the enchanting country that surrounds Loch Katrine when, as a very young man, “a writer’s apprentice”—or, as we should phrase it this side the Border, a solicitor’s clerk—he was entrusted with the execution of a legal instrument against certain Maclarens, refractory tenants of Stuart of Appin. He was

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accompanied by a sergeant and six men from a Highland regiment near Stirling, "with directions to see that the messenger discharged his duty fully, and that the gallant sergeant did not exceed his part by committing violence or plunder." The sergeant, it seems, had known Rob Roy and was full of stories about him, but, as it turned out, the Maclarens, against whom the expedition was directed, had already fled, and there was nothing in any way out of tune with the making of pleasant memories. Lockhart seems to think it probable that this warlike excursion was not only Scott's first entrance to the Loch Katrine country, but was also a part of his first visit to the veteran Invernayhle himself, a friend to whom he owed endless stories of Highland adventure—a notable visit, for it was then, as a boy of fifteen, in quite the early days of his legal apprenticeship, that he first beheld the Vale of Perth, with the deep and eager delight in its loveliness which he has himself described. "I recollect," he says, "pulling up the reins, without meaning to do so, and gazing on the scene before me as if I had been afraid it would shift, like those in a theatre, before I could distinctly observe its different parts, or convince myself that what I saw was real. Since that hour, the recollection of that inimitable landscape has possessed the strongest influence over my mind, and retained its place as a memorable thing, while much that was influential on my own fortunes has fled from my recollection."

It was many a long year afterwards that, when writing "The Lady of the Lake," he went into

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Perthshire to verify the possibility of King James's ride from the banks of Loch Vennachar to Stirling Castle within the time allowed for it in the poem, and, to his great delight, satisfied himself that it could be done. He was the more anxious and careful over every such detail because, as he himself tells us, Miss Rutherford, the aunt who was so near his own age as to have grown up with him in comradelike and cousinly friendship, had warned him against risking a fall by issuing yet another romance in verse after the immense popularity and success of "The Lay of the Last Minstrel" and "Marmion." "You stand high," she had said; "do not rashly attempt to climb higher . . . a favourite will not be allowed even to stumble with impunity." To which he replied in the words of Montrose

"He either fears his fate too much,
Or his deserts are small,
Who dares not put it to the touch,
To win or lose it all."

In his own introduction to the edition of 1830 he follows this up with his charming story of the friend, bred up a farmer, to whom, knowing his "powerful understanding, natural good taste, and warm poetical feeling," he read, long before publication, the first canto of "The Lady of the Lake." This good fellow, "a passionate admirer of field sports," followed the account of the stag-hunt with rapt attention till it reached the point at which the dogs plunged into the lake to follow their master, who had stepped into the shallop

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with Ellen Douglas, when he started up, struck the table, and declared indignantly that "the dogs must have been totally ruined by being permitted to take the water after such a severe chase." Scott was naturally delighted to find that so good a sportsman should thus reassure him by the complete illusionment with which he had followed the whole incident as though it had actually happened. The author was, however, somewhat disconcerted by the quickness with which the same friend discovered the main secret of the romance directly FitzJames wound his horn, helped probably by an old ballad in which it is said of that personage, whose identity he divined so readily:

"He took a bugle from his side,
He blew both loud and shrill,
And four-and-twenty belted knights
Came skipping owre the hill."

"This discovery," remarks Scott, "as Mr. Pepys says of the rent in his camlet cloak, was but a trifle, yet it troubled me; and I was at a good deal of pains to efface any marks by which I thought my secret could be traced before the conclusion, when I relied on it with the same hope of producing effect with which the Irish postboy is said to reserve a 'trot for the avenues.'"

To the admirable little biography of Scott by Mr. Adams nothing need here be added, except a few touches bearing directly or indirectly on "The Lady of the Lake"—touches which can but add warmth and colour to our realisation of

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the brave, tender, vivid personality of one who was man first and author afterwards, yet in whom man and author were never at variance, the life he lived, the aims he followed, being wholly in accord with the high-hearted ideals of his romances and novels. Born on August 15, 1771, to the time of his death on September 21, 1832, his life overflowed with noble energies and achievements and untiring human fellowship. Every one knows the main events of his career; his early years in the office of his father, a writer to the Signet, his eager devotion to literature, his long hours of creative toil in the early morning before the tasks of the lawyer's office could claim him, his marriage in December 1797, following closely on the mastery of all selfish elements of pain in an early romance which left a deep mark upon his life, his growing fame, his entanglement in the affairs of the Ballantyne publishing house, his heroic and persistent literary labours in the determination to retrieve his bankruptcy. Permanently lamed as the result of a fever when a mere baby, one of his earliest recollections was of what happened to him in his grandfather's house at Sandy Knowe, where, some one having suggested that every time a sheep was killed the lame baby should be swathed in the warm sheepskin, he well remembered lying on the floor in this odd garment while his white-haired grandfather tried to coax him to crawl, and an old kinsman who had been colonel of the Greys—a picturesque figure in cocked hat, embroidered scarlet waistcoat, light-coloured coat, and milk-white locks tied in military fashion—knelt on

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the floor beside him, dragging his watch, trying to induce the child to creep after it. His surroundings, like his ancestry, were quite appropriate to the makings of a Border minstrel of high degree. The influences went much deeper than pictured memories of grey-haired military kinsmen. Mr. Adams reminds us that he was descended from "Auld Watt of Harden" and his wife "the Flower of Yarrow," and we may add that, distant kinsmen of his own having fallen at Culloden, his Jacobite feeling was deepened by the stories told in his childish hearing of the cruel executions at Carlisle which followed.

From his grandmother, as well as from the old books that lay in the window-seat at Sandy Knowe, he learned many a stirring tale of Scottish brigandry and adventure, while at the same time his own outdoor life, in company with flowers and birds and beasts, doubtless strengthened his sense of kinship with those gentle, though not human, brothers and sisters; for he tells us he "was usually carried out and laid down beside the old shepherd, among the crags and rocks round which he fed his sheep," and, in spite of his shrunk and contracted limb, this fine "open-air treatment" made of him a healthy, high-spirited, and, apart from his lameness, even a "sturdy child."

No reader of "The Lady of the Lake" will be surprised to find that his love of horses was hereditary and that in manhood he told Miss Seward he regarded the horse "as the kindest and most generous of the subordinate tribes," and

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went on to say : "I hardly even except the dogs ; at least they are usually so much better treated that compassion for the steed should be thrown into the scale when we weigh their comparative merits." But his passionate feeling for animals extended far beyond horses and dogs. He never forgot his grudge against one distinguished kinsman concerning whom he writes :

"When I was four or five years old I was staying at Lessudden House, an old mansion, the abode of this Raeburn. A large pigeon-house was almost destroyed with starlings, then a common bird, though now seldom seen. They were seized in their nests and put in a bag, and I think drowned, or threshed to death, or put to some such end. The servants gave one to me, which I in some degree tamed, and the brute of a laird seized and wrung its neck. I flew at his throat like a wild cat, and was torn from him with no little difficulty."

In observing the place which Lufra holds in the poem, it is not without interest to note that Lockhart thinks "The Lady of the Lake" was probably begun at Ashiestiel in the autumn of the year 1809, though not published till the following May, and that it was in the January of that same year that Camp had died, the brave old dog who, even in his last illness, would leave his mat by the fire and go as far as failing strength would let him to meet his beloved master, when the servant, as he laid the cloth for dinner, roused him with the news, "Camp, my good fellow, the Sheriff's coming home by the ford," or "by the hill." Scott's

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daughter said she had never seen her father look so sad as when he was smoothing down the turf over Camp's grave while the whole family stood round in tears. He was to have dined out that night, but excused himself on the ground of "the death of a dear old friend."

Scott's virtues were of the high and passionate order, and far removed from the mere negations of a weak or small nature. Integrity, purity, honour—these were with him the knightly rule of life, the daily affirmations through those deeds which wove the poetry of life itself in that strenuous career of his. He early wrote: "'My mind to me a kingdom is.' I am a rightful monarch, and, God to aid, I will not be dethroned by any rebellious passion that may rear its standard against me." That mind, which was indeed his well-ruled kingdom, was stored to overflowing with tales of Border chivalry and romance. He had no need for research when he sat down to write "*The Lady of the Lake*" in those early morning hours at Ashestiel which provoked Miss Rutherford's questioning.

In the measure of "*The Lay of the Last Minstrel*," suggested, he tells us, by Coleridge's "*Christabel*," he had now become a familiar and practised rhymers. And if mind and hand were ready, it is certain that his heart also leapt to the congenial effort. We know where the scene of the poem is laid, and it is interesting to remember that Lockhart, commenting on a letter from one of his friends who feared it might go ill with Scott when the woman he had long loved and half

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hoped to win became the wife of another, remarked that "Scott had, however, in all likelihood, digested his agony during a solitary ride in the Highlands." That was thirteen years earlier, and when Scott wrote "The Lady of the Lake" he had long been a happy husband and father. At the time when destiny withdrew from him what had been the hope of so many years, he had not permitted any bitterness to hold dominion over him, and had thrown himself eagerly into all that could healthily absorb every leisure moment outside his daily tasks—translations, poems, Border minstrelsy, militia duties, and all "the little nameless unremembered acts of kindness and of love" that marked his career at all times; and within a year after the destruction of his long-cherished dream, he had met the lady of his final choice and pledged to her that faithful devotion which blessed the married life of both. Yet perhaps it is not fanciful to find in the romance of "The Lady of the Lake" not only the charm of buoyant happiness, but also of a certain self-mastery and chivalrous apprehension of moral strength, all the more vital for

"A tinge it may be of their silent pain

Who have longed deeply once and longed in
vain."

No appreciation of "The Lady of the Lake" would be complete which could fail to note Ruskin's quotation in "Sesame and Lilies" of two lovely descriptive lines concerning Ellen Douglas, and the flower which she herself chose as her emblem :

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“Even the light harebell raised its head,
Elastic from her airy tread.”

“But it is little,” adds Ruskin, “to say of a woman that she only does not destroy where she passes. She should revive: the harebells should bloom, not stoop, as she passes.” It is interesting, by the way, to note the intermingling of influences at the close of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. In Scott’s early childish days Dr. Duncan—almost the only visitor in his grandfather’s house at Sandy Knowe, a visitor who was very impatient of the child’s shouting recitation of his favourite ballad, “Hardyknute,” and on one occasion exclaimed, “One may as well speak in the mouth of a cannon as where that child is”—was old enough to remember having seen Pope and many of his distinguished contemporaries.

Scott was in his fifteenth year when he met Burns, who died in the same year as that in which his own first volume of ballads was published. The meeting occurred in the house of Professor Ferguson, in the presence of Dugald Stuart and other literary folk, one evening when Burns was deeply moved “by a print of Bunbury’s representing a soldier lying dead on the snow, his dog sitting in misery on the one side, and on the other his widow, with a child in her arms.” Scott was a warm friend and literary admirer of Joanna Baillie, and exchanged letters with Coleridge, as well as with Goethe. On one occasion he quotes Coleridge in support of his own belief that locality plays a considerable part in the individual appeal of

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much modern verse. Coleridge's name naturally calls to mind that of Southey, and the fact that Scott's earliest contribution to the *Edinburgh Review* dealt with some of Southey's work. Sir Walter's intercourse with the Wordsworths in 1803 is full of the deepest interest. Space forbids anything but the most cursory mention of his friendship with Rogers and the two Hebers, and of all that he did for James Hogg, "the Ettrick shepherd," nor is it possible to make more than a brief allusion to Crabbe's exclamation when he read "The Poacher" in imitation of his own heroic couplet: "This man, whoever he is, can do all that I can do, and something more." Scott's analysis of the character of Byron, whom he knew well, both directly and through their common friend Tom Moore, is very shrewd. In remembering that he was the contemporary not only of Cowper, but also of Keats and Shelley, to say nothing of Leigh Hunt, though he lived so much longer than any of them, there is a whimsical pleasure in the coincidence that in one of the letters in "Red Gauntlet," published a few years after that exquisite lyric of Shelley's beginning

"One word is too often profaned
For me to profane it,"

"Green Mantle" writes: "I will not use the name of love on this occasion: for I have applied it too often to transient whims and fancies to escape your satire should I venture to apply it now. For it is a phrase, I must confess, which I have used—a romancer would say, *profaned*—a little too *often*."

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Scott's modesty about his own work came out in a very amusing way in relation to "The Lady of the Lake." James Ballantyne remembers coming into his library soon after its publication and asking his daughter: "Well, Miss Sophia, how do you like 'The Lady of the Lake'?" Her answer was given with perfect simplicity: "Oh, I have not read it; papa says there's nothing so bad for young people as reading bad poetry." It was about the same time that his little boy came home from school after a fight which had been provoked by his indignation at being, as he thought, compared to a girl, his companions having dubbed him "The Lady of the Lake," a title which to him meant nothing. Indeed it was the same child who, having been asked why people showed to his father more reverence than to his uncles, after considering for a minute or two, replied very gravely: "It is commonly *him* that sees the hare sitting."

It may be interesting to add, on the authority of Mr. Robert Cadell, that "from the date of the publication of 'The Lady of the Lake' the post-horse duty in Scotland rose in an extraordinary degree, and indeed it continued to do so regularly for a number of years, the author's succeeding works keeping up the enthusiasm for our scenery which he had thus originally created."

Mr. Cadell also supplied Lockhart with the following details: "The quarto edition of 2050 copies disappeared instantly, and was followed in the course of the same year by four editions in octavo, viz., one of 3000, a second of 3250, and

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a third and a fourth each of 6000 copies ; thus, in the space of a few months, the extraordinary number of 20,000 copies were disposed of. In the next year, 1811, there was another edition of 3000 ; there was one of 2000 in 1814 ; another of 2000 in 1815 ; of 2000 again in 1819 ; and two, making between them 2500, appeared in 1825 : since which time 'The Lady of the Lake,' in collective editions of his poetry, and in separate issues, must have circulated to the extent of at least 20,000 copies more. So that down to the month of July 1836 the legitimate sale in Great Britain had been not less than 50,000 copies."

"The Lay of the Last Minstrel" is by many set higher than "The Lady of the Lake," but unbiased criticism is perhaps scarcely possible from the present writer, who in days of earliest childhood fell in love first with "The Lady of the Lake," and yielded to the enchantment of its romantic verse a childish loyalty, which preceded and in some degree awakened the love of poetry in the stricter sense. It is easy here and there to find fault with the occasional jog-trot or jerkiness of the octosyllabic verse, but it has been well said that in a stirring gallop over open country what is most needed is the sense of vitality and verve, and there can be no doubt that the sympathetic reader is effectually carried away. Paradoxical though it may seem, possibly the poem owes somewhat of its gaiety and recklessness to the complete mastery of rich and varied lore which lay behind it. For the absence of mental effort or strain may well have added to its limpid clear-

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ness and spontaneity, which are fresh and sweet as the pure laughter of children, or of a Scottish mountain stream as it sparkles among the flashing pebbles. Yet to say this is to express but little of its deeper charm.

Clearly as the mountains which surround Loch Katrine are mirrored in its lucid depths, in this enchanting little romance are reflected the noblest characteristics of Sir Walter Scott. Men loved him, not for his pardonable ambition to give an added glory to a family already rich in high and quixotic traditions, still less for his boyish determination to embody at Abbotsford some semblance of his feudal dreams, but for his large-hearted chivalry, his high integrity, his warm, quick-beating heart of passion, his essential purity and magnanimity.

Well may Swinburne say of him, in his essay on that last published edition of his journal from which we have here quoted: "While the language in which he writes endures, while the human nature to which he addressed himself exists, there can be no end of the delight, the thanksgiving, and the honour with which men will salute, aloud or in silence, the utterance or the remembrance of his name."

AN EASTER REVERIE

THOUSANDS who are not of the Christian faith feel year by year the Earth's Easter parable, and that faith is the richer in significance for those beautiful myths, of many ages and many races, that have now been crowned and consummated in our story of the risen Master.

Deep within the heart of man lies the key to the divine hieroglyph whereby he reads of a beauty above and beyond and about him. Some may read at leisure whole chapters at a time. Others must drudge so hard that the messages reach them in instantaneous flashes between heavy tasks: the vision of the year's first golden blossom, perhaps, as they wash the doorstep with hands benumbed by the bitterness of winter and soul still drowsy from the sleep of exhaustion; or a sudden glory of the river when the noonday sky leans its brightness on its heaving bosom, as they toil for hard-won bread in the docks.

Happy are they who, at morning, when the sun goeth forth as a bridegroom, can pause for awhile to read the sentence enscrolled in the heavens, and at eventide can once more pause in the temple when

“A certain moment cuts

The deed off, calls the glory from the grey :

A whisper from the west

Shoots—‘Add this to the rest,

Take it and try its worth : here dies another
day.’”

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The sunsets here in the south have of late been of extraordinary beauty, and of a delicate, austere charm that befits the leafless trees, the early twilight, the ascetic inclemency of the hard-fought days. Again and again has it happened of late that the sky, after the first going down of the sun, has been a sea of wondrous pale green, on which the apple-bloom clouds of rare pale rose-colour have made long peaceful lines far above the horizon, to the north-west of the clear golden splendour above the vanished light. The bare trees and fields do but emphasise the solemn loveliness, and seem to await in grave stillness the rising of the moon and the coming forth of the stars.

“Come, blessed barrier between day and day!”

What, in that haunting and perfect line, Wordsworth has said of sleep, is what many a strenuous spirit has felt about the last sleep of all. “The New Mysticism” hints at the abolition of earthly death, but perhaps in the innermost heart of us we shrink back a little from that thought. Dear and beautiful is the earth, full of sights and sounds and old familiar faces that we love with steadfast passion and cling to, as more to us than any unseen heaven; but, even as we gaze at them, they are subject to the law of change, and we know that to remain unchanged, among the ever changing, would be a loneliness far deeper than that mysterious change which can but deepen our consciousness of the reality we sought in them, and, with them, shall thereafter more completely behold. There is a small butterfly, with wings of celestial azure, which

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haunts warm coast-lands and is a veritable type of Psyche. If the chrysalis from which it awoke were capable of thought, it would be hard to believe that it would desire the endless existence of a glorified and perfected chrysalis. Some strange foreboding there would be that

“The ends of being and ideal grace”

would be missed, if the chrysalis, *qua* chrysalis, did not die.

“The New Mysticism!” that is the title of an eloquent volume which suggests many uplifting thoughts even to those who regard a part of its “new” doctrine as an old and dangerous heresy. “If Being and Existence are one,” writes the author, “one and indivisible; if man’s soul is the expression of Eternal Spirit; if our life does depend upon ‘every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God,’ is it any wonder that we perish when we feed our minds as we do on words that have no Spirit or Life in them, on words which have only a spurious vitality of defective thought and feeling? When we come to examine the kind of stuff we try to live on, we are surprised that we should be able to last as long as we do. It literally is ‘such stuff as dreams are made of’—shadowy, ghostly stuff of appearances, the picture of the world of effects, the reflection of sense experience with no substance in it.”

It has been well written, “The eyes that see the King in His beauty will see nothing else, for everything will reflect that beauty.” Nothing else? Nothing but the beauty of that Presence, even in

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our darkling lives here on earth? If that be so, then indeed was Tennyson right when he wrote that they who have attained to that open vision behold us, whom they still love,

“With larger other eyes than ours,
To make allowance for us all.”

We weep that we seem to be divided from them ;

“And yet, this may be less so than appears,
This change and separation. Sparrows five
For just two farthings, and God cares for each.
If God is not too great for little cares,
Is any creature, because gone to God ? ”

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V. A PASTORAL

ARTHUR HUGH CLOUGH is not forgotten. His immortality is secured, not only by the haunting and individual sincerity of such lyrics as "Qua Cursum Ventis," "A London Idyll," and "Qui Laborat Orat," but also by Matthew Arnold's "Thyrsis," in which the unanswerable pathos is the more moving because it breathes through the fragrance and blossoming of the year's loveliest season. For, taking to heart the storms and sorrows that raged outside his peaceful Oxford, and the "life of men unblest," is he not tenderly reproached for leaving the world too soon, like that "too quick despairer," who flies away before the fulness of the summer has come :

"So, some tempestuous morn in early June,
When the year's primal burst of bloom is o'er,
Before the roses and the longest day—
When garden-walks, and all the grassy floor,
With blossoms red and white of fallen May
And chestnut-flowers are strewn—
So have I heard the cuckoo's parting cry,
From the wet field, through the vext garden-
trees,
Come with the volleying rain and tossing
breeze :
The bloom is gone, and with the bloom go
I !"

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Time has not conquered Clough, but only given him a more recognised place among the nineteenth-century poets.

Nevertheless, as a social reformer and prose-writer, he is not much remembered, and, to most of the men and women who throng our London streets, the most fascinating and humorous of his longer poems, that "Long Vacation Pastoral" to which he gave the name of "The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich" is indeed a book either forgotten or unknown. Yet how it brims with practical philosophy and sweet laughter and sound common sense!

It may well be open to discussion how far, in the strictest sense of the word, it is a "poem" at all. It certainly does not pretend to the exquisite melody and precision of lyric touch which distinguish "Ite Domum Saturæ, Venit Hesperus," that mountain cattle-song in which, through all its spontaneity and music, there breathes the same open-eyed and paradoxically childlike acceptance of life's ironic possibilities and insouciant charm, and of the fact that

"—work we must, and what we see, we see.

And God he knows, and what must be, must be."

Clough's courage is almost always the fortitude of endurance rather than the reckless dash of bravado. He faces, in all directions, the complexities of life and the fact that man's finite understanding is but a clumsy foot-rule, after all, for the measuring of immeasurable spaces. He never

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makes that a reason in favour of shirking the plain mandate for its use, in so far as it can be used, but only against imagining that there ever can be a moment at which it has passed beyond its own boundaries. In much of his best work there is a certain half-melancholy grace of patience, of self-command, of hope that is never an unreasonable hope—a grace enlivened often by humour so delicate as to be akin, not to mere ordinary laughter, but to that wistful jesting which may give the hint of coming tears.

Perhaps one reason why his simplest lyrics touch us so deeply and haunt us so effectually is found in a certain economy not only of language but of feeling; for, in the memoir edited by his wife, we read that "His absolute sincerity of thought, his intense feeling of reality, rendered it impossible for him to produce anything superficial, and therefore actually curtailed the amount of his creations."

In a review which he wrote on the poems of Alexander Smith and on those two volumes of Matthew Arnold which appeared under the title of "Poems by A.," he says of the former: "These poems were not written among books and busts, nor yet

"By shallow rivers, to whose falls
Melodious birds sing madrigals."

They have something substantive and lifelike, immediate and first-hand about them. There is a charm, for example, in finding, as we do, continual images drawn from the busy seats of

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industry; it seems to satisfy a want that we have long been conscious of, when we see the black streams that welter out of factories, the dreary lengths of urban and suburban dustiness,

“ ‘The squares and streets
And the faces that one meets,’

irradiated with a gleam of divine purity.

“There are moods when one is prone to believe that, in these last days, no longer by ‘clear spring or shady grove,’ no more upon any Pindus or Parnassus, or by the side of any Castaly, are the true and lawful haunts of the poetic powers; but, we could believe, if anywhere, in the blank and desolate streets, and upon the solitary bridges of the midnight city, where Guilt is, and wild Temptation, and the dire Compulsion of what has once been done—there, with these tragic sisters around him, and with pity also, and pure Compassion, and pale Hope, that looks like despair, and Faith in the garb of doubt, there walks the discrowned Apollo, with unstrung lyre; nay, and could he sound it, those mournful muses would scarcely be able, as of old, to respond and ‘sing in turn with their beautiful voices.’”

How discerning is this also from the same forgotten essay:

“The lessons of reflectiveness and the maxims of caution do not appear to be more needful or more appropriate than exhortations to steady courage and calls to action. There is something certainly of an over-educated weakness of purpose in Western Europe—not in Germany only, or

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France, but also in more busy England. There is a disposition to press too far the finer and subtler intellectual and moral susceptibilities: to insist upon following out, as they say, to their logical consequence, the notice of some organ of the spiritual nature; a proceeding which, perhaps, is hardly more sensible in the grown man than it would be in the infant to refuse to correct the sensations of sight by those of touch."

Just as his plea for action comes with special weight from one who must have had all the impeding difficulties of subtle self-analysis to contend with, so the very fact of his honest scepticism adds profoundly to the value of that unconquerable faith to which he won through many-sided doubt.

His sense of brotherhood was too deep and strong to find facile expression, but, turning to his speeches at Oxford, we find that, when the subject of debate was that "the character of a gentleman was in the present day made too much of," "Clough spoke neither for nor against the proposition; but for an hour and a half—well on two hours—he went into the origin of the ideal, historically tracing from mediæval times how much was implied originally in the notion of a 'gentle knight'—truthfulness, consideration for others (even self-sacrifice), courtesy, and the power of giving outward expression to those moral qualities. From this high standard he traced the deterioration into the modern Brummagem pattern which gets the name," and then he added: "I have known peasant men and women in the humblest

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places in whom dwell these qualities as truly as they ever did in the best of lords and ladies, and who had invented for themselves a whole economy of manners to express them, who were very 'poets of courtesy.'"

This takes us by a natural transition to his "Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich."

The Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich is the Scotch farmhouse to which Philip Hewson, Radical and poet, is invited, as an incidental result of his ironical allusion to the Game Laws, in a speech made at a dinner given to the Highland peasantry, to which he and his fellow-Oxonians had been welcomed as guests while out on a reading party. But, though the young Radical is the hero of the "pastoral" (which is, by the way, a skilful experiment in English hexameters), the poem turns not so much on politics, in the narrow sense of the word, as on social ethics in general, and especially on the ethics of marriage:

"Stately is service accepted, but lovelier service
 rendered,
Interchange of service the law and condition of
 beauty."

Those two lines strike the keynote of the whole, but it is far indeed from being a mere sermon, and mingles the joy of wild mountain scenery—cool tarn and mountain torrent and golden-changing autumn trees—with the peculiar charm of Oxford and the brimming gaiety of undergraduate life. Philip had to buy practical wisdom at the

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usual price in the market, and to learn that the romantic charm of poverty may be as factitious in its way as the dazzling glamour of wealth or the far more dazzling glamour of passion ; but, in the end, he finds his mate in a woman as strong and good as she is beautiful, the daughter of a peasant, of clear and bright intellect and intuitions full of the tender refinement of a high and noble nature, as well as of that deep and faithful affection without which no wisdom is really wise. It is in the *Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich* that he finds her, but we are tempted to give in his own words his earliest vision of what love is and how it rebukes the lackadaisical fancies of mere fashion :

“ Oh, if they knew and considered, unhappy ones !
oh, could they see, could
But for a moment discern, how the blood of true
gallantry kindles,
How the old knightly religion, the chivalry semi-
quixotic
Stirs in the veins of a man at seeing some delicate woman
Serving him, toiling—for him, and the world ;
some tenderest girl, now
Over-weighted, expectant, of him, is it ? Who
shall, if only
Duly her burden be lightened, not wholly removed from her, mind you,
Lightened if but by the love, the devotion man
only can offer,
Grand on her pedestal rise as urn-bearing statue
of Hellas ;

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Oh, could they feel at such moments how man's
heart, as into Eden
Carried anew, seems to see, like the gardener of
earth uncorrupted,
Eve from the hand of her Maker advancing, an
help meet for him,
Eve from his own flesh taken, a spirit restored
to his spirit,
Spirit but not spirit only, himself whatever
himself is,
Unto the mystery's end sole helpmate meet to
be with him ;
Oh, if they saw it and knew it ; we soon should
see them abandon
Boudoir, toilette, carriage, drawing-room, and
ball-room,
Satin for worsted exchange, gros-de-naples for
plain linsey-woolsey,
Sandals of silk for clogs, for health lackadaisical
fancies ! ”

One of the finest passages, though too long to
quote, is that which begins “ But as the light of
day enters some populous city——,” in which the
redeeming power of dawn is used as an image
of the redeeming and unifying power of love in the
midst of modern life :

“ So that the whole great wicked artificial civilised
fabric—
All its unfinished houses, lots for sale, and rail-
way out-works—
Seems re-accepted, resumed to Primal Nature and
Beauty ! ”

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Singularly beautiful also is Elspie's vision of what Philip is to her in her ideal and her work.

She has been describing the laborious upbuilding of her own life, as of one side of a bridge :

“ Sometimes I find myself dreaming at nights about
arches and bridges,—
Sometimes I dream of a great invisible hand
coming down, and
Dropping the great key-stone in the middle :
there in my dreaming,
There I felt the great key-stone coming in, and
through it
Feel the other part—all the other stones of the
archway
Joined into mine with a strange happy sense of
completeness.”

It was Clough who wrote : “ To earn his own bread honestly—in the strictest sense of the word honestly—to do plain, straightforward work or business well and thoroughly, not with mere eye service for the market, is really quite a sufficient task for the ordinary mortal.”

But what to this man was included in the day's “ plain straightforward work ” is implied in the fact that he once walked for four days over a rough country to get medicine for the sick child of a peasant stranger in the Highlands ; and that he seems to have regarded this as a simple act of elementary duty.

ROSES

GIFTS for a lover, most exquisite roses !

Love, who uncloses

Your leaves, to uncover

Summer's own sweetness, uplifts far above her
Messages brought by her, brought by the summer :

*(Ah, tho' she brought them, He only, He wrought
them !)*

Love made the roses, not any chance comer.

Crimson of burning, your heart-petals fashion—

Whiteness of passion

To blushes returning,

Gold of the sunset and dim divine yearning,
Pale as the dawn-star when day dawns above him !

*(Fragrance, the soul of them, breathes thro' the
whole of them—)*

Roses, the Rose-maker wants us to love Him !

BETWEEN THE RAINS

IT seems that the earth is thankful and the trees rejoice. The nights of soft refreshing rain have quieted the dusty ground, and now the south wind swings her censer thro' the fir-woods, and even the alabaster box once broken by a woman's hands can scarcely have poured forth a fragrance more celestial or more penetrating. The rain we still ask for—rain and yet more rain—gives promise of descending speedily from the brooding, dove-coloured skies that earlier in the day have been white and blue and pearl-colour, with delicious April-like changes of passing showers, on this May morning. But the sweet outpouring of the clouds through many an hour of this week's nights and days has already wrought miracles. May-flowering tulips, crimson and white, have unfolded. The mountain ash is full of blossom, and I have just seen a whole border of self-sown nemophila in full glory of heavenly azure, while, hard by, the pansies and violas in my friend's garden looked on the graceful white Italian sundial, near the climbing passion-flower, as yet only in leaf. The lupins, blue and white, are in bud, and in the same bed, bordered by the golden Alison, now in full splendour, I noticed, to my amazement, that some of the rhododendrons are already *shedding* their bloom! Nay, more, the sycamore, which a fortnight ago was full of blossom, is now dangling its little bunches of

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keys. The laburnums are showing their pale gold, and the white lilac is at the height of its beauty. Its homelier neighbour, with its clean country smell, is very lavish this year in bloom and in sweetness, now that it is no longer dried up with thirst, and it adorns the gardens of rich and poor alike,

“With many a pointed blossom, rising delicate,
with the perfume strong I love,
With every leaf a miracle.”

The red and green blossoms of the *arbor vitæ* have long ago turned to fruit, but the chestnuts have lighted their lovely lamps among the green, and many of the roses are in bud, though the “heaps of the guelder-rose” are most of them still but half out. The limes have scattered the tiny, dainty pink spathes that held their freshly unfolded leaves, and before we know we shall have June standing in the doorway, and be haunted by Browning’s *Garden Fancies* :

“Where I find her not beauties vanish ;
Whither I follow her, beauties flee ;
Is there no method to tell her in Spanish
June’s twice June since she breathed it with
me?”

I have heard the wood-pigeons making love in a little copse just off the common, but the robins are quieter than usual, and thrushes and black-birds seem still for a while to have lowered their jubilant outpourings in a pause, whether of bliss or of expectancy, while we wait for the further

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plenitude of the coming rain. As I left a cottage where Death had just taken by the hand one of the children who used to come running to meet me when I passed along the lane, the "wandering voice" of the cuckoo seemed to echo with a mellow and more plaintive sweetness than its wont from the far horizon, and thinking of the boy's mother and how cold and frozen had seemed all that I could strive to say to her of my own certainty that "it is well with the child," I longed for that "fountain of tears" whereof Arthur O'Shaughnessy wrote before he entered the "undiscovered country":

"You may feel, when a falling leaf brushes
Your face, as though some one had kiss'd you;
Or think at least some one who miss'd you
Had sent you a thought,—if that cheers;
Or a bird's little song, faint and broken,
May pass for a tender word spoken:
—Enough, while around you there rushes
That life-drowning torrent of tears.

"But the floods and the tears meet and gather;
The sound of them all grows like thunder:
—O into what bosom, I wonder,
Is pour'd the whole sorrow of years?
For Eternity only seems keeping
Account of the great human weeping:
May God, then, the Maker and Father—
May He find a place for the tears!"

NEIGHBOURING GARDENS

THEY are all *parterres* in Allah's Garden ; for His garden embraces the blossoming of the rose as well as the mystic splendour of the desert. In every unbrutalised heart that poet finds an echo who wrote that

“ A garden is a lovesome thing, God wot.”

There are three gardens here that neighbour one another, and, though all are well loved and toiled for, some who know them might almost maintain, perhaps, that the smallest of the three betrays the most cherishing care, the most thoughtfully fastidious choice of effects. It lies embosomed in trees and greensward, and crowds an amazing variety of precious things into its tiny rock-garden, in which the straight, narrow paths are hardly more than six feet long in their miniature mazes.

The Norwegian pine in the further corner of the lawn seems to have come straight out of Hans Andersen's fairy tales, and the garden itself is tended by a maiden worthy of his legends, fearless, and regardless of the winds of our English climate, waking with the sun all the year round, a skilled musician, an experienced bee-keeper, and the owner of one of the best herbariums in the county. But she is only chief of the staff to the owners of the garden, and its master makes of it all a love-offering to its mistress, a *châtelaine* still often in the “land of pain”—an exile from her beloved garden.

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Therefore it is full of sweet perfumes and rare colours: celestial blue in the borders, scarlet and flaming orange here and there among the dark foliage, white and delicate yellow and all shades of madder and brown in its masses of viola.

But the heart of the garden is its rosery. Roses of every form and hue, from purest white and creamy gold and pale pink, to the deepest, most delicious crimson and the sunset glow of rosy, transparent lemon-colour. Tea-roses especially are the glory of this garden; and, now that the season is late and their blooming less abundant, exquisite shades of crimson make an open glory in their midst, where elect pentstemons have been cunningly planted among them, to defeat all idea of formality or primness, in one large, luxuriant rose-bed. The sweet, poignant odour of the white jasmine floats down to them from that sunny wall of the house where wistaria has bloomed before it; and all about the fruit-beds hide lovely things with learned names—ivory white and dimmest blue—while the purple clematis flaunts it about the windows that look on the lawn.

But the big garden, that runs this charming demesne very close, possesses the overmastering charm of great stately elms and beeches—not to mention one magnificent cedar-tree—the charm, too, of winding shrubberies and lovers' walks; benches from which to watch the sun set over the orchard or behind the distant village spire; a great sense of space and "retirèd-leisure," and the antiquity that has seen many generations come

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and go, and hides within its depths endless romances and joys and sorrows. Ah, well ! no small modern garden, however alluring, can ever have quite the fascination of these fields of poetry that have grown up half of themselves and take the heart back to that garden where Jane Eyre talked with Rochester, or that glorious mingling of flowers and fruit-trees where Hetty Sorrel picked red currants, or that other garden where Vernon Whitford fell asleep.

The roses on which its mistress spends so much loving labour, glorious and generous though they be in fragrance and in colour, may perhaps be rivalled, though the Gloire de Dijon on the *loggia* would be hard to beat, and the daintily pencilled salpiglossis, in which she takes such pride, may find competitors in newer gardens. But the garden itself, as it stretches out behind the dazzling scarlet and green where geraniums and begonias flash their brightness, has all the glamour of "immemorial elms" and half-forgotten days and bygone dreams.

Yet the third garden, embraced by one of the loveliest and most peaceful estates in the Midlands, equally old and spacious, and presided over by three lovely young goddesses worthy alike of the "lovesome spot" and of their father, the ideal country rector—all enchanting and each one different from the other—this third garden is a Garden of Eden without any forbidding sword.

Its tall hollyhocks and spreading cedars have their counterparts in the other garden ; but the smell of its yew-hedges in the sun, and the sweetness

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of the big lavender-bush, which holds a story characteristic of the rector's kind heart, the close neighbourhood of the homely and ancient village church, the mingling of all estates and orders of men and women among those who find its gates ever open to them and its simple hospitality always at their service—all these things leave indescribable memories in those hidden places of the soul that, long afterwards, like Wordsworth's daffodils, help to make the bliss of many a solitude.

Of all the three gardens it may be said that half their beauty lies in the fact that they give Nature a little of her own way and have not been pruned to death. Old Quarles would have loved them; for in his "Hieroglyphs on the Life of Man," beginning with the folly of over-zeal in such matters, he goes on to touch on the deep mystery on which many a wise modern physician is beginning to rely—a mystery which holds the attention of all those who grope after the idea that the true remedy for human withering and weakness may lie deep in that well-spring of being which is but another name for the divine sonship of man. Of flowers and flames he makes his imagery, but in the main he is not hard to follow.

No brief is held for Quarles, or for what may be but a half-truth at the best, but he clothes it in a quaint bit of rhyme, of which a snatch will make a pretty tag to this string of holiday recollections, even though it be quoted but in fragmentary and skipping fashion; and those who like it not may yet smile at the conceit :

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“ Always pruning, always cropping,
Is her brightness still obscur'd ?
Ever dressing, ever topping ?
Always curing, never cur'd ?
.

You that always are bestowing
Costly pains in life's repairing,
Are but always overthrowing
Nature's work by over-caring :
.

Nature worketh for the better,
If not hinder'd that she cannot ;
Art stands by as her abetter,
Ending nothing she began not ;
.

But to make a trade of trying
Drugs and doses, always pruning,
Is to die for fear of dying ;
He's untun'd, that's always tuning.
.

Hold thy hand, health's dear maintainer
Life, perchance, may burn the stronger :
Having substance to sustain her,
She, untouch'd, may last the longer :
When the artist goes about
To redress her flame, I doubt,
Oftentimes he snuffs it out.”

All the little gardens of earth, said the writer,
are a part of Allah's Garden ; but so, indeed, are
the wildernesses ; and in the midst of them is that

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true Pierian spring of which Quarles and his fellow-poets have quaffed deeply, but where every wayfarer and fool may quench his thirst—a well-spring which may have stood for much more, perhaps, than we fancy the Greeks dreamed of, until Plato came, and a greater even than Plato—one of the many dim visions of the Fountain of Living Water, the Well of Life.

APPRECIATION OF "SCENES OF CLERICAL LIFE"

[Here reprinted from "*The World's Classics*" by Mr. Henry Frowde's kind permission.]

WHEN George Eliot began to write these "Scenes of Clerical Life," though she was already thirty-six, and had done much valuable work in the way of translation and editorial routine, she was still very diffident of her own powers, and thought she was lacking in certain qualifications necessary to the novelist.

We have to thank George Lewes, and also, we must add, Mr. Blackwood, the publisher to whom Lewes submitted these first anonymous stories, for the warm encouragement and sympathy which led her to enrich the world by a gift so much greater than she, or her friends either, had at first divined in her.

Those who have not leisure to read Mr. Cross's deeply interesting biography, yet desire authentic knowledge of her life in relation to her work, can find all they need, very succinctly and sympathetically given, in Sir Leslie Stephen's charming volume.

The setting of the three stories now before us lay in that Warwickshire which George Eliot knew and loved so well, the county into which her father, Robert Evans, who was, as we know, more or less the prototype of Adam Bede and Caleb Garth, had moved his home, when he became

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agent for the Arbury estate under Francis Newdigate, on the death of that Sir Roger Newdigate of Arbury Park who was the original of Sir Christopher Cheverel in "Mr. Gilfil's Love-story." Harriet Poynton, Robert Evans's first wife, who had died ten years before George Eliot's birth, had been for many years a trusted servant and friend of the Newdigate family at Arbury Park, in the parish of Chilvers Coton, better known to us under its pseudonym of Shepperton. Milly Barton seems to have been the wife of a Mr. Gwyther, curate of Chilvers Coton, who died when George Eliot was sixteen years old, and had been a friend of Mrs. Robert Evans, the latter being the original, by the way, of Mrs. Hacket. We learn also that Mr. Tryan's persecution was suggested by an actual experience, the details, of course, being altered. In "Mr. Gilfil's Love-story" the excellent plot was of George Eliot's own construction, though a certain Sally Shilton, the daughter of a collier, transformed by the novelist into Catharine Sarti, had really been adopted by the Newdigates; and their young heir, Charles Parker, did, like Captain Wybrow, die suddenly, this girl, who gave promise of musical gifts, being at that time a little over twenty. The musical training given to her did not avail for the career the Newdigates had intended for her, inasmuch as her health proved too delicate, and she married a Mr. Ebdell, who was the vicar of Chilvers Coton. Out of these facts and her own vivid memories and creations George Eliot wove this beautiful trilogy which made her first volume of fiction.

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It was no haphazard collection of short stories ; for when she first showed to Lewes in the September of 1856 the scenes in "Amos Barton," with which these stories began, she expressed a hope that she might be able to write a series of tales embodying her impressions of the country clergy who had come her way, and these studies breathe the very atmosphere of English country life, as she knew it, in the early half of the nineteenth century. They are at once simple and complex, elementary and profound. For they touch the deepest realities of life itself, with all its hidden complexities and apparent simplicities ; turning, like the noblest Greek tragedy, on those primary emotions which are our essential heritage, emotions which, while linking us with what is highest and most tender in the animals as part of our family, link us also with the Divine Love wherein we are born, and toward which the whole creation "groaneth and travaileth."

Strikingly diverse, despite their common setting, they nevertheless all turn upon the educating power of that Infinite Love, manifested through transcendent human affections—"loves" that "in higher love endure,"—affection and loyalty through which the Most High often teaches us that, as has been well said, "our hearts are restless till they rest in Him," and find that love His dwelling-place.

They are all stories of love and sorrow. Nor is the *leit-motif* which unites them merely what Tennyson has expressed, in the well-known lines of "Maud,"

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“The dusky strand of Death enwoven here
With dear Love’s tie, makes Love himself more
dear.”

It is much more than that; for it suggests that through death as well as through life the Divine Love educates and redeems. Even when death comes, not as Walt Whitman’s gentle “Mother” and “Deliveress,” but seeming, as death often does, a cruel and unwelcome guest, snatching the young mother from husband and children when we think they need her most, or leaving a Maynard Gilfil bereft of his heart’s desire on the very verge of its apparent consummation, we are yet made to feel, as in all highest art, that in the uttermost grief, as well as in profoundest rapture and joy, human lives are lifted into unseen possibilities, and are confronted with a vaster outlook, a more unquenchable hope, than our little curtained stage of earthly existence can ever hold or express; so that the protagonist in the conflict is found at the moment of death crowned with promises no human words can formulate, no mortal vision pursue to their fulfilment. The love of Amos Barton,—too absolute to dream that any fool could doubt its loyalty,—was not crushed or embittered by the bereavement which robbed him of his chief outward joy and comfort, but was consecrated to higher issues which, through his grief and loneliness, lifted this poor “mongrel,” whose “very faults were middling,” into fellowship with the loftiest and noblest souls, and gave to Milly’s children a heritage that was far beyond

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ordinary wealth. The tragedy in which Maynard Gilfil was involved forbids any cheap glibness on the part of the critic. I may indeed well be warned off by some sneering and cynical person, who will inquire at this point whether it is proposed to analyse the wit and wisdom of these beautiful stories on the level of a Sunday-school tract. But is there any admirer of this clean-limbed, candid young *chevalier sans reproche* who does not find him vastly nearer to all we worship, after he has passed through his mortal anguish with the courage of self-surrender and uncomplaining self-abnegation, than when he is merely an untried, charming young parson very deeply and unselfishly in love?

George Eliot had, doubtless, a special knowledge of timber through her long, intimate drives with her father over the estates for which he was responsible, and her imagery is especially telling when she compares "the dear old vicar," Mr. Gilfil, to a tree. "The heart of him was sound, the grain was of the finest; and in the grey-haired man who filled his pocket with sugar-plums for the little children, whose most biting words were directed against the evil-doing of the rich man, and who, with all his social pipes and slipshod talk, never sank below the highest level of his parishioners' respect, there was the main trunk of the same brave, faithful, tender nature that had poured out the finest, freshest forces of its life-current in a first and only love—the love of Tina."

We are told that Mr. Blackwood was dis-

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satisfied with the first part of "Janet's Repentance," when it was sent to him for publication as part of "the series," and I must admit that it seems to me the least satisfactory part of the volume before us. But the middle and end are so masterly and so moving that the story as a whole is surely one of the greatest of George Eliot's gifts to her fellow-men. Here, as in "Silas Marner" and "Adam Bede," she fearlessly drew for us the story of a soul not only restored and redeemed, but far stronger and more beautiful at the end of the battle than in the smooth days of untroubled youth.

And how full of sane, quick-beating charity are all these studies of human nature! All alike lead to the equipoise not of

"that false calm which many feign,
And call that peace which is a dearth of pain,"

but to that deep and vibrating peace which passeth understanding, that secret home and temple of the heart, which

"For its very vestibule doth own
The tree of Jesus and the pyre of Joan."

"Ideas," as George Eliot truly says, "are often poor ghosts; our sun-filled eyes cannot discern them; they pass athwart us in thin vapour, and cannot make themselves felt. But sometimes they are made flesh; they breathe upon us with warm breath, they touch us with soft responsive hands, they look at us with sad sincere eyes, and speak to us in appealing tones; they are clothed in

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a living human soul, with all its conflicts, its faith, and its love. Then their presence is a power, then they shake us like a passion, and we are drawn after them with gentle compulsion, as flame is drawn to flame."

We have already been reminded that "while we are coldly discussing a man's career, sneering at his mistakes, blaming his rashness, and labelling his opinions—'Evangelical and narrow,' or 'Latitudinarian and Pantheistic,' or 'Anglican and supercilious'—that man, in his solitude, is perhaps shedding hot tears because his sacrifice is a hard one, because strength and patience are failing him to speak the difficult word, and do the difficult deed."

We all know the dangers of indiscriminate giving, but Mr. Jerome's open-handedness was not indiscriminate, and modern selfishness, as well as certain forms of modern philanthropy and stultified communism, might well ponder deeply on Mr. Jerome's assurance that "I'd rether give ten shillin' an' help a man to stand on his own legs, nor pay half-a-crown to buy him a parish crutch; it's the ruination on him if he once goes to the parish. I've see'd many a time, if you help a man wi' a present in a neeborly way, it sweetens his blood—he thinks it kind on you; but the parish shillins turn it sour—he niver thinks 'em enough."

Here is practical wisdom of the best, that practical wisdom which is born of the heart where Wisdom and Love are one.

Colonel Newcome himself is not more finely

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drawn than Mr. Tryan, who, dwelling among the squalid homes of the saddest and most poverty-stricken, "wants to mek himself their brother, like; can't abide to preach to the fastin' on a full stomach."

There is not space here to quote the description of Mr. Tryan's study, but there is a fine passage in which George Eliot remarks that "the man who could live in such a room, unconstrained by poverty, must either have his vision fed from within by an intense passion, or he must have chosen that least attractive form of self-mortification which wears no haircloth and has no meagre days, but accepts the vulgar, the commonplace and the ugly, whenever the highest duty seems to lie among them."

Sir Leslie Stephen has laid his finger on the true vindication of George Eliot's work from the charge of a too pedantic didacticism and philosophic seriousness, when he reminds us that it is absurd to expect an author steeped in philosophic ideals to present us in fiction with a world entirely devoid of their influence, and elsewhere remarks, with a certain mordant incisiveness: "If anybody holds that morality is a matter of fancy, and that the ideal of the sensualist is as good as that of the saint, he may logically conclude that the morality of the novelist is really a matter of indifference. I hold myself that there is some real difference between virtue and vice, and that the novelist will show consciousness of the fact in proportion to the power of his mind and the range of his sympathies."

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Even George Eliot's detractors are wont to make an exception in favour of these early stories and of "Silas Marner." I am of the other school. By this I do not mean that I set these stories lower, for I believe them to be masterpieces of their kind—and their kind is of the best—but only that I set the other work high also—am, in fact, in no sense a detractor, but a born admirer. It is, doubtless, an idiosyncrasy of temperament, and one which I am not insistent to defend, that while I confess the later novels are more open to criticism than the earlier, yet for sheer enjoyment "Middlemarch" and "Daniel Deronda" have been to me quite as enthralling as any; and even the much-criticised "Felix Holt" has given me especially keen delight.

In all George Eliot's work, if I except "Brother Jacob" and "The Lifted Veil" and "Theophrastus Such," I find power, humour, reality, indestructible charm. Yet, seeking to adjust the relative claims of her first fiction and her latest volumes, I confess that Milly Barton is to me a more vivid reality than some of the later heroines, Mr. Bates has to my thinking more verisimilitude than certain subsidiary characters in "Deronda," and Mr. Jerome is a more familiar acquaintance than Mirah: but that is possibly the result of my own limited vision, whereby I fail to recognise Gwendolens and Mirahs when I meet them, or find the salient oddities of a Mr. Bates more lifelike than the cruel emptiness and obstinacy of a Rosamond Vincy, whose blonde loveliness would, I fear, effectually blind me to her baleful character.

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What does seem incontrovertible is the almost overwhelming force with which the earlier novels bring home to the heart the joys and sorrows of people whom our commonplace souls would, if we met them in the flesh, be likely to pronounce rather uninteresting ; and the genius with which the value and significance of the individual lot and of the individual soul, is intertwined with the realisation that each is but one unseen drop in the rushing torrent of wider events, that torrent itself being but an infinitesimal incident in the cycle of a vaster cosmos.

Those of us who believe with Browning that

“each of the Many helps to recruit
The life of the race by a general plan ;
Each living his own, to boot,”

must be grateful for the superb art which never leaves either the “each” or the “many” out of account, and, while indicating the power of even human qualities to react upon environment and insensibly modify circumstance, invigorates and uplifts the spirit with a faith deeper than any circumscribing formula or narrowing logic of mere words—faith which enabled Janet Dempster to say in the moment of parting with her earthly deliverer, “God will not forsake me,” and to walk “in the presence of unseen witnesses—of the Divine Love that had rescued her, of the human love that waited for its eternal repose until it had seen her endure to the end.”

There is a resplendent passage which I had marked for possible quotation, but since Sir

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Leslie Stephen has forestalled me in his chapter on "Scenes of Clerical Life," I will content myself with pointing out the exquisitely simple word of comfort that follows close on this same passage, which, but for that, might have seemed to imply the loneliness of a world from which God was absent. Tina, who is likened by Bates to his darling flowers, the "nesh and dilicate" cyclamens, is here, as often throughout "Mr. Gilfil's Love-story," compared to a little fluttering bird; and the thought of the sparrow that cannot fall to the ground "without our Father" would seem to be implicit in the allusion to her "torn nest," when, on the very next page to that which writes those terrible words which say she and her trouble were "hidden and uncared for," we read that, when she knelt down to say the little prayer of her childhood, she added the words, "O God, help me to bear it," and "that day the prayer seemed to be heard."

In "Amos Barton," the first of the three stories now before us, which, in the poignant simplicity of its unsentimental pathos, and its awakening of our sympathy for the dullest and most commonplace of men, is from one point of view the author's supreme triumph, it is easy to admit faults of construction. It is much less perfectly welded than some of George Eliot's later work, and even betrays here and there a certain stiffness and awkwardness in its transition from scene to scene. Its unfolding is less organic and inevitable than that of "Adam Bede," for instance. Yet I am not at all sure that what at first appears a

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defect may not be an obscure source of added power in the grip which the story takes of the imagination, whether it does not for that very reason hold the reader with a more impressive sense of actuality, as though some unaccustomed narrator were recalling vividly remembered facts which require a certain effort to marshal them in their due order. And it would be difficult to find one of George Eliot's stories more vital with the natural humour of life's delightful absurdities and incongruities, its mingling of the heroic with the trivial, the Divine with the homely. Of wit also it has more than its share.

In this quiet story of a village town, in which there are no sensational incidents, no swift surprises, no men or women in any way remarkable except for simple goodness, the very laughter provoked by the author's scathing sallies against those petty egotisms and self-deceptions, which we are apt to treat more leniently in ourselves than in others perhaps, not only relieves the strain of what would otherwise be a sense of grief too heavy to be borne, but at the same time really deepens the probing influence of its noble pathos—a pathos which is always finely restrained, and therefore the more moving. It stands for ever to the honour of Charles Dickens, whose most vaunted pathetic scenes lacked precisely that quality of self-restraint, that he was among the first to recognise and extol, in the then unknown writer, “the exquisite truth and delicacy both of the humour and pathos.” In “The Sad Fortunes of the Rev. Amos Barton,” a story in which the closing scenes

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touched with that economy of language, that wise control of feeling, which makes them the more profoundly touching from the absence of any emotional flourishes or rhetorical exaggeration, the children around Milly's death-bed are not likely to be forgotten by any one who, in imagination, has once stood beside them. Indeed, in her presentment of children, George Eliot always stands supreme, and her supremacy lies in the very fact that her children are as normal and delightful as hedgerow flowers. They are just such children as cross life's daily path, cheering as daisies and buttercups, or those dainty, fragrant bindweeds that bear a star in their pale blossoming and do not despise even the kerbstones of the village roadway, or the hillocks of the village graves. In the early stories they are especially bewitching, and it is not only Patty Barton who warms the memory with a loved, caressing presence, but a whole troop of merry boys and girls who are never obtruded on the reader's attention, yet add to the sunshine and the sweetness of a world where there is much suffering, but also much innocent though transient delight, as well as more enduring joy.

Among the fine qualities incontrovertibly recognised in George Eliot's work, dramatic situation is not, as a rule, very strikingly in evidence, but there is a moment in "Mr. Gilfil's Love-story" which must in this regard satisfy the most exacting critic:

"‘Yes, Maynard,’ said Sir Christopher, chat-
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ting with Mr. Gilfil in the library, 'it really is a remarkable thing that I never in my life laid a plan, and failed to carry it out. I lay my plans well, and I never swerve from them—that's it. A strong will is the only magic.'"

There follows an allusion to the happy marriages he has planned for Anthony, who is already beyond the reach of earthly planning, and for two others dear to the old man's heart, but all tangled in a sorrowful destiny beyond his unravelling.—And then . . .

"The door burst open, and Caterina, ghastly and panting, her eyes distended with terror, rushed in, threw her arms round Sir Christopher's neck, and gasping out—'Anthony . . . the Rookery . . . dead . . . in the Rookery,' fell fainting on the floor."

As a finished work of art, "Mr. Gilfil's Love-story" is, undoubtedly, the finest of the "Scenes of Clerical Life," though "Amos Barton" is my own favourite; but it is in "Janet's Repentance" that we have perhaps the most perfect expression of the wise and loving philosophy which underlies them all. It is there that we are reminded that "the only true knowledge of our fellow man is that which enables us to feel with him—which gives us a fine ear for the heart-pulses that are beating under the mere clothes of circumstance and opinion. Our subtlest analysis of schools and sects must miss the essential truth, unless it be lit up by the love that sees in all forms of human

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thought and work, the life and death struggles of separate human beings."

If it be asked, how it was possible that one who had renounced what is ordinarily called Christianity, could yet indicate with such sincerity, as in these sketches of clerical life, the very source and secret of its power, may we not reply that her own faith was, doubtless, wider and deeper than ever found full expression either in her words or her life? Mr. Gilbert Murray's beautiful translation of Hecuba's prayer in "The Trojan Women" seems to me to sum up what, consciously or unconsciously, was the prayer that breathes through all George Eliot's work, and must lead many a soul to Him who is the Light of Light :

"Thou deep Base of the World, and thou high
Throne

Above the World, whoe'er thou art, unknown
And hard of surmise, Chain of Things that be,
Or Reason of our Reason; God, to thee
I lift my praise, seeing the silent road
That bringeth justice ere the end be trod
To all that breathes and dies."

But there were moments—who can doubt it?—when the great novelist, passing beyond the barriers of "surmise" and of that which limits our finite share in the infinite Reason, entered into the Love "which passeth knowledge," and, perceiving with the eyes of the soul that "the end" is not in this life, attained to those secrets which the intellect cannot reach.

“GOING INTO THE SILENCE”

You will have bathed in stillness.—CHARLES LAMB.

It is easy to exaggerate the “sentimental emotionalism” of our grandmothers—to forget that they were often protected from hysterical fashions of feeling and behaviour by a saving sense of humour and a delicate wit. No doubt they had their dangers, but the very quietness of their lives tended to self-restraint, dignity, and reserve. Among highly educated women—and there were many such, even though they were not all a Mrs. Somerville or a Mrs. Browning, a Mrs. Gaskell or a Miss Yonge—the long hours of manual occupation gave opportunity for original and reflective thought and for a certain deepening of character, such as only the finest natures gain in that opposing stress of modern bustle and noise, by which too frequently the weak and flimsy ones are frittered away or ruinously disintegrated.

There is a verse of Matthew Arnold’s “Farewell,” in which he speaks of women as

“things that live and move,
Mined by the fever of the soul.”

And the fever is likely to increase alarmingly with the increase of complicated responsibility in our modern life, and is likely also to tell most severely on the tenderest and the bravest. If the women of the past were sometimes, we are told, engrossed in trivialities, through the lack of a wide intellec-

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tual outlook, the women of to-day may be in danger of shallowness, through the very multiplicity of their interests and cares, or, on the other hand, through their self-satisfied absorption in the one person who is the centre of their lives.

But the door of salvation from this lowering process is even now not shut to them, and there are many ways in which some of the busiest may still "buy oil for their lamps." If a woman be ever so unfortunate as to be unable to enter the temple of art for heavenly merchandise, or to gather the flower of peace in her own garden plot, or even, through some unhappy doubt, may feel unable to join in the ancient liturgy, with its joyous and tranquillising effects, there are yet moments of enforced waiting and monotonous toil, when the touch of unseen Love will meet all honest effort after secret converse, by a rekindling of the light that had gone out.

It sounds like a paradox to say that those who are most vividly in touch with their fellow-creatures most crave solitude; but it is a paradox by no means so paradoxical as it looks. To crave solitude is not to wish to be lonely nor to desire continued isolation; a solitude which was perpetual would, indeed, lose all its charm. The highest peak of a mountain-top is a heavenly place; but who would choose to dwell there always, unless, indeed, it proved that meeting-place of souls, that "paved work of a sapphire . . . When they ate and drank and saw God also," which Browning took as the symbol of the most satisfying of all human companionships?

GOING INTO THE SILENCE

The soul that has never felt "life's fretful fever" has never truly longed for solitude. And though anything so unhealthy as "fever" may be incompatible with the highest, purest love, and with that "enthusiasm of humanity" which is the most catholic of affections, yet even a perfectly unselfish passion (and who is so perfect as to be absolutely unselfish?) may crave an occasional withdrawal from the material presence of the dearest of fellow-creatures, if only to realise its own reality and find renewed strength and joy in its own validity. Milton's Adam exclaims in his own Eden :

"For solitude is sweet society,
And short retirement urges swift return."

One of Browning's loveliest lyrics asserts the converse of this, and speaks of the dual solitude as never so intense as when

"Up and down amid men, heart by heart fare we !"

But if this be true of the love of lovers, there is a larger, deeper reason why those who renounce themselves for the good of the race must, if their sympathies be quick, meet the revitalising presence of Love in solitude as well as in the crowd. Undoubtedly the women of to-day stand in special need of that occasional solitude which it is often so hard for them to secure. For many a noble-hearted woman the only certainty of this calming and bracing remedy for irritation and exhaustion lies in the steadfast adherence to the practice of setting apart out of the long, active, unselfish days,

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one daily half-hour in which there is literal obedience to the Master's command, not only to enter into a room where others are not passing to and fro, but also to "shut the door"—to gain, in fact, the quiet peace of what the Society of Friends rightly names "going into the silence," a silence wherein, as in Charles Lamb's "Quakers' Meeting," "the mind" has often "been fed" as well as the soul.

To live incessantly for others, and in others, is to live a hundredfold; and this multiplex activity may doubtless be far less perilous, even physically, than the maddening strain of a carking self-regard; yet it can only be healthily sustained by the invigorating renewal of individuality in solitary communion with that angel of Love and Light with whom Israel wrestled till daybreak, and who since the days of Israel has revealed His name more fully.

To be alone is not to be lonely; the deepest loneliness of all is found in uncongenial company.

Doubtless a man feels this in proportion to the vividness and sensitiveness of his sympathies. But it was another side of the question which suggested the paradox. The quick sense of human kindred is a daily delight; yet how precious must be accounted those hours of joy in which it is untouched by pain! In that "star Rephan" of which Browning writes it may be otherwise. But that thought stultifies itself at the outset, and merely proves what has here been asserted, as by a sum in subtraction you prove a sum in addition. For we are met by the poet's implied suggestion that

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we have passed beyond that sphere where there is no unhappiness, no sense of discord or of aspiration, into a life where each is bound to all and no sorrow is wholly individual, and wherein the old French proverb becomes true in a deeper sense than is intended, and "*il faut souffrir pour être belle.*" If character is to become beautiful, with an ever widening and deepening sympathy, the fire of fellow-feeling must at times scorch and shrivel many easeful, self-indulgent tendencies which cannot vanish without a little salutary hurting. As for the just punishment of that paltry self-seeking and greed of admiration felt by the poor thin-skinned wretches who call themselves sensitive and are known as "touchy," it is not of their self-centred pain that beauty can be born. To such there is here no briefest allusion, for in no large sense are they wont to excel in sympathy, being much more likely to see all things refracted and distorted through their own self-regarding fantasies. On the other hand, all self-renouncing regard for the just claims and true interests of others tends to robustness of character.

To rejoice with those who rejoice, and to weep with those who weep, with

"a heart at leisure from itself,
To soothe and sympathise,"

must doubtless involve pain as well as joy, even though it meet Romola's definition of happiness, as that to be chosen above all else, and though, like all merging of self in greater and diviner interests, it must necessarily ennoble and in-

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vigorate; yet even the suffering which there will be may result in a deepening of that calm and joyous energy which is, like all virtue, its own crowning reward.

But energy, in proportion to the strenuousness and reality of its effort, demands at intervals a counterbalancing and regenerating repose. We know from the lives of all men in all ages that when the ear is very sensitive to the "still, sad music of humanity," so that the sound of its laughter and its tears, its joy and grief and hope and failure, reverberate unceasingly through the frail human brain of the listener, the tension at times demands a withdrawal into the great silence, where He who "fashioneth all the hearts of them" may "cover them with His Presence from the strife of tongues."

And if it be impossible to be alone with the woods and hills or to go into a desert place apart, a moment with a picture of Turner or a poem of Wordsworth may take the soul into the stillness in which the nearness of the Great Companion is realised. Is not this the debt that we owe to all great art? Art may be what men call secular—surely a crass distinction, since the whole universe is sacred—but if it be *noble* art, it will always draw aside the veil from that mysterious presence chamber, the Temple of Rest.

The Divine Peace that abides there will seldom permit either man or woman to remain long in inactivity, for it is a part of the mystery that the love which breathes such penetrating repose into the out-wearied spirit is yet that energy of love

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of which Wordsworth wrote, as the very life of life, when he said :

“Life, I repeat, is energy of love.”

It is the other side of the paradox (which is in itself by no means paradoxical) that they who best love the Presence found in solitude will best love their fellow-creatures.

If we seek solitude, cherishing hatred in our heart, the solitude will certainly be odious to us, and, though it may have been sought, it can hardly be said to be loved. But for the servant and the friend of Love, the wilderness will blossom as the rose, and the solitary place will rejoice and sing.

Perhaps to a woman longing to carry blessing to the hearts and lives of others it may be in the pressure of the crowd who will throng her return that she will most vividly feel and touch the kindly recreating Presence who, whether in the desert or the market-place, is so perpetually waiting to renew our humanity, that “Closer is He than breathing, nearer than hands and feet.” She will come back into that multitudinous throng which constitutes human life, with a new radiance on her face and in her heart ; a look of courage for the downcast, a tender smile for the sad, an electric silence of sympathy for those who can bear no word. Her own soul will kindle others with the joy of fellowship and the anguish of pity. Life will be to her one long poem, in which the sorrowful and sordid details, the madness, the despair, are all trans-

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figured and redeemed by fellowship Divine and human ; and at the end of life she will ask no better guerdon than to be able to say of Love :

“He rushes on my mortal guess
With his immortal things.
I feel, I know him. On I press—
He finds me 'twixt his wings.”

A HOLIDAY ON DARTMOOR

To most people the sound of "the moors" will at once suggest Scotland. To them "the moors" mean a great waste of fragrant heather, where through the long days, knee-deep in the hardy, purple-blossomed twigs, they taste the clear, invigorating air, and industriously—shoot.

But in England too there are moors. In Yorkshire there are wide reaches of upland where the brown grass waves among the purple ling and the air is pure and sweet and fine.

And, to say nothing of Exmoor, in the northern half of Devonshire, here in the midst of South Devon there is a great moor, where gorse and heather are breaking into bloom, where the wild ponies cry to one another from the hills, and the white-bosomed swallows fly hither and thither, and the mountain streams are ever rushing and leaping and making their sweet, cool noises among the moss and fern. This moor is no wild desert, no lofty, monotonous level. Sometimes it is broad, rocky upland, all heath and gorse; but oftener it is broken here and there by cornfields and green meadows.

Here on its edge, in the valleys and clustering round the churches on the hills, are human habitations, grey stone houses, thatched cottages, and mills. But these have a comfortable woodland air, as if they had come with the boulders or

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grown with the trees. The blue smoke, as it curls from their chimneys, brings no reminder of towns or cities; it does but emphasise the tranquil solitude of the surrounding country.

Near to Princetown, in the heart of the moor, still lingers a fragment of the primeval oak forest where in old days the Druids celebrated their mysterious rites. Memories cling round its name. Wistman's Wood it is called. But even the name is not so weird as the place. Ferns grow on the mossy boughs of the gnarled and ancient oaks. Often one of the trees will wreath its twisted branches with those of its neighbour in fantastic entanglement. Luxuriantly leafy, but crooked and dwarfed, are these oaks. Shoulder-deep in bramble and bracken, they are half buried also by slabs and pyramids of lichen rock and time-worn stone. It is a fine place for twisted ankles; stepping into what looks like innocent fern, the unwary explorer stumbles over a jagged boulder or falls into a treacherous hollow or grassy bog.

Below the lower edge of this elfin wood flows a babbling, sobbing stream; and, crowning the slope above, wild, rocky slope, where the delicate bell-heather is budding, and tiny orange-brown butterflies are wandering, rise rugged masses of granite, very like the tors which mark the surrounding hills, though on a much larger scale. Very different is this fortress of stone from the cairn on the top of Snowdon and other Welsh mountains. This is not a cone of heaped-up shingle, but a pile of formidable slabs built up

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one above the other, now jagged and irregular, now shaped like a rude altar.

The loneliness even here is broken by the lowing of the cattle—beautiful red Devonshire cattle that come for shelter from sun and wind beneath the shadow of these rocks. There are sheep too, but they have been shorn and cannot pretend to any snowy whiteness, though in this part of the county there is no warm-coloured loam to give them the ruddy tinge to which the eye is accustomed in the sea-coast valleys. As they wander bleating over the hills they are but grey and ordinary sheep.

August is not here a sultry month. There are days when the sky is a deep, cloudless blue and the air heavy with languid heat and sunshine. But how many are the days when the pearly clouds chase one another across the azure space, when the hills are dappled with brilliant light among the ever-shifting shadows; days when the air is pure and quickening, and the little red-breasted wind-chat flies from twig to twig of the peach-perfumed gorse, that is even now blossoming into its August splendour of billowy gold.

On such a day should Wistman's Wood be seen, and then from those granite boulders what a glorious landscape rolls itself out! Beyond the open moorland the hills lie fold on fold, now illumined by a distant flash of radiance to a bright and delicate verdure, now almost golden in the sunlight, now again dusky with fir-trees or shadowed by those rounded blocks of snow-white cloud that sail across the stainless blue overhead.

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The heather is very late this year; nor can this be called exactly a heather country, though the common purple heath grows well among the gorse, and the bell-heather blossoms in the boggy part of the moor, and ling will soon be tolerably abundant. But the hue of the tiny heather-bells has not yet darkened from the tint of the foxglove to bluish purple, and is mingled here and there with the russet of the reddening whortle-twigs. Sometimes there is a glowing patch upon the far-off hills, but the chief variety of colour is given by the luxuriant woodland, which clothes the lower slopes on the edge of the moor and follows the courses of the streams. There also the ash almost loses its sameness, and assumes a certain stateliness and wealth of foliage which come near to beauty. Beech-trees are always lovely, though in the wilder valleys they grow too closely to develop that splendid strength and symmetry which give to them so perfect a grace in well-planted avenues. The oaks also are small, and their stems seem to have caught the silvery glimmer of their neighbours, the birch-trees. The berries of the graceful mountain ash are not yet scarlet; and, though wild raspberries drop their pink fruit into the sedgy undergrowth that borders the woodland streams, and nuts have taken the first touch of brown upon the hazels, the lilac-tinted blackberry blossoms are not yet over, and the wild strawberry is still plentiful. The harebell does not grow here, but a dainty pale blue campanula springs from the mossy turf under the trees beside the brooks. Meadowsweet and

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wood-betony and wild thyme grow plentifully, and innumerable ferns, from the common polypody to the royal osmunda. And everywhere in the woods are sweet-smelling fir-tees, everywhere the clear and sparkling rills are musical among the stones, and fragments of rock peep out through the undergrowth, clothed with ivy, and lichen, and moss. These rocky, river-haunted woods recall those lines of Keats in which Lorenzo describes to Isabella the secret place where his murderers buried him :

“Saying, moreover, ‘ Isabel, my sweet !

Red whortleberries droop above my head

And a large flint-stone weighs upon my feet ;

Around me beeches and high chestnuts shed

Their leaves and prickly nuts ; a sheep-fold bleat

Comes from beyond the river to my bed :

Go, shed one tear upon my heather-bloom,

And it shall comfort me within the tomb.’ ” *

It only needs the orange-winged butterflies and the yellowing bracken to make the picture complete.

You will say this is not moorland scenery. But it is all a part of Dartmoor just as truly as the less frequent hut-circles and bogs, does indeed follow the course of the Dart, and is in its way characteristic: moreover, here we are on the edge of the moor rather than in its central stronghold. Nevertheless, let us go forth again to the wild, fenceless gorse-country, and breathe a more

* It is interesting to note that Keats writes his preface from Teignmouth.

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mountainous air, and scan a wider horizon, and count the multitudinous heights and valleys that lie beneath us; and, southward, where the hills roll more gently towards the coast, let our eyes rest upon the level line of the distant sea. There is a magical charm in this south country, not least in these waste places. The air, though exhilarating, is balmy; the sky, though breezy, is blue. There is a soft glamour and enchantment. It is a land of dreams. Are we for once rid of all painful realities, all torturing problems?—May we construct a world of our own imaginings, an idyllic world into which neither sin nor sorrow can enter?

What is that ugly blot upon the moor, that dreary range of unbeautiful buildings?—It is a prison. The world is not idyllic, and it is better to face its ugly facts than to pretend a comfortable blindness. It is well for the soft effeminacy of a self-indulgent age that it cannot always escape the sight of suffering. The swallows fly, the sun shines, the wild flowers unfold their gay petals. The young rabbits are so tame that the village children can catch them. This heathery moorland suggests the wildest, sweetest freedom. Yet even here there is a prison. Even here we are reminded “what man has made of man.”

L'ENVOI TO THE THREE FOLLOWING SONNETS

*Written in the week following King Edward's death, at
the moment of the terrible mining accident which called
forth Queen Alexandra's help and sympathy in the midst
of her own grief.*

OH, dear Queen-Mother, now we kiss your hands
For writing words that let us share your pain !
Would we might comfort you ! But not in
vain

Shall be your trust : the Empire understands
This day her duty, and through all her lands
True to that great commission shall remain,
Seeing in your son your "Dearest" once again
And deeply loyal to his least commands.

We bless you too for help to those poor wives
From whom the pitiless earth has swallowed up
The men they loved. Oh, may the God above,
Who visiteth "souls in prison," to such lives,
From the inscrutable depths that filled their cup
And yours, dear Mother, give *Himself*, who is
Love !

TO THE PEACEMAKER'S MEMORY THREE SONNETS

I LIVE secluded and since life began
 Had never once set eyes upon the King ;
 Yet from my soul his praise I learned to sing
As one who built—love's faithful artisan—
A Palace of Pity : in his mortal span
 Lay duties that might break an angel's wing
 And crush a king thus human. Wondering,
I saw how he achieved them—he, a man !—
He shared his people's pleasures and withstood
 The caste-conventions that might hold apart
 A King and People.—The great Architect
Blessed this Grand Mason of the Brotherhood
 Who worked with generous toil of hand and
 heart
 In that vast temple love and peace erect.

VITAL and simple, scorning empty pride,
 Duty to him was ever dominant.
 He never scamped his work ; no touch of cant
Obscured this kingly heart that, far and wide,
Loved, pitied, wounded wasters that abide
 In a dark hell : on those poor lives that pant
 For help and healing, he bestowed no rant,
But deep compassion with true deed allied.
God bless him, God who blesseth quick and dead,
 Who hath the peacemakers His children called !
 This man refused from work for us to cease

TO THE PEACEMAKER'S MEMORY

While breath was in his body. Disenthralled
Of that laborious crown which tires the head,
The faithful servant hath at last release.

Who, who can boast when Death is standing by
To level king and commoner and call
An emperor as roughly as a thrall?—
Would God, when we poor labourers come to die
And our disrobements in their coffins lie,
Such well-earned peace as his might crown us all!
When on our little stage the curtains fall,
Will our small tasks show nothing left awry?
He loved the suffering, and, untiring, sought
The nations of the earth with peace to crown.
No king could hold regalia more sublime
Than a world's love and peace by friendship
wrought—
This jewelled circle is undying renown,
Not death, but coronation for all time.

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NEXT in discernment to the criticism of sympathy, which is the most divining of all, is that unexpected and incisive appreciation which is the criticism of antithesis, when those who stand at the opposite pole of intellectual aspiration or spiritual belief, by formulating some crying need, or emphasising some contrary aspect of the truth, unconsciously urge the fulfilment of the one or add importance to the complement of the other.

And it would be difficult to find anywhere phrases, or attitudes of mind, suggestive of a more just discrimination of the precise and individual value of such a novel as "John Halifax" than are those to be found in Mr. Frederic Harrison's *Essay on Victorian Literature*,* an essay in which neither the book nor its author is even so much as named. "Every one is afraid," says Mr. Harrison, "to let himself go, to offend the conventions, or to raise a sneer."

It is because Miss Mulock feared none of these things, but cared only to speak her message with clearness and obedience, while earning an honest day's wage by an honest day's work, that the book not only went straight to its mark just where its simple poetry was most profoundly wanted, but has also retained an ever-widening popularity wheresoever "the English tongue" is spoken;

* "Studies in Early Victorian Literature" (Edward Arnold).
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and has become, to many a draughtsman, tradesman, and hard-handed toiler, on both sides of the Atlantic, a dear companion and a household name.

Mr. Harrison also points out how many of our great prose-writers of the century have occasionally fallen into "bombast" or "fustian," turgidity or elaborate self-consciousness; and, if not too "precious," have now and then been in danger of descending to "limelights and coloured lenses"; or, avoiding the jerkiness of the great novelist whom he wittily names as "a prose Browning," and following Matthew Arnold when he bade them "flee Carlylese as the very devil," have, in the good company of "Culture itself," fallen into "the trap in the very act of warning others." On the other hand, he praises the "pure, natural, and most articulate prose," of a conventional yet popular writer who was a friend of his own, and thereby unwittingly lays his finger on one secondary excellence of the novel before us.

"Romance," he says, "finding little of romance in the real world, has taken two different lines in the desperate effort to amuse us somehow. The virtuous line is the phonographic reproduction of everyday life in ordinary situations. The disreputable line is Zolaesque bestiality, and forced, unreal, unlovely, and hysterical sensationalism." Both these dangers has "John Halifax" escaped in the region of that "social romance" which the same writer describes as "the true poetic function of women." The book has sometimes been claimed as the precursor and antetype of the ordinary middle-class novel, of which it was supposed to set

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the fashion. But it was hardly a novel at all in the ordinary sense of the word. It was a romance, at once homely and "poetic"; and that fact may suggest some of its most obvious deficiencies and many of its most striking merits.

"It is felt on all sides," says Maeterlinck, "that the conditions of workaday life are changing, and the youngest of us already differ entirely in speech and action from the men of the preceding generation. A mass of useless conventions, habits, pretences, and intermediaries, are being swept into the gulf"; and it may be fairly added that among the unseen forces making in that direction has been the far-reaching influence of this modest and humane story of John Halifax the tanner, a study from the life, in which Christianity stands sponsor for the finest breeding, and claims as its own for ever the dignity and simplicity of work.

The author "believed," writes a sympathetic critic, "in the nobility of man as man, and looked upon condition, circumstance, or birth, as an accident which ought not to determine his ultimate position. Her ideal man, John Halifax, carried about with him an old Greek Testament, in which, after the name of an ancestor, was the inscription 'Gentleman.' Such a charter she held to be the inalienable possession of every human being."

Another friend of Miss Mulock, who is at once a man of letters and a man of affairs, said lately in speaking of her: "I once asked an American why his people thought so much of President Grant, since his democratic ideals, excellent though they might be, were, after all, shared by thousands of

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his fellow-countrymen. 'That may all be true,' was the reply. 'But he was the first to figure it out!' Well," he continued, "of the author of 'John Halifax' it may be said, 'She was the first to figure out that ideal of manhood and of chivalry before which the most inveterate class-prejudice hid its silly face and was ashamed.'"

The social order is constantly falling out of tune: she struck a true note which others were quick to perceive and take up. *She struck the note*; but it may be added that it was characteristic of her admirable reticence that, having once struck it, she never forced or overlaboured it. Nor is she responsible for every flat street-melody which gives a false rendering of the new harmony.

If I may rephrase and intermingle thoughts finely put by both the writers already quoted, at the same time venturing to add a sequence or two of resulting choice and amplification; the tree of life is of a unity so complex and incessant that its most effulgent blossoming, though attributed perhaps only to the few, is in reality put forth by its soul as what Maeterlinck has called the "Flower of the multitude"; so that, even in this more actual "fraternity," which bears the deepening hue of our own century, it may be difficult to disentwine cause and effect, or to say from which particular bough of Igdrasil the pollen was first wafted that touched the heart and petals of every corolla with a new and more heavenly colour. So little is this a question of mere intellect, or eloquence, or solitary power, that we find the same fragrant promise of advancing per-

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fectibility in such divergent names and utterances as those of Wordsworth and Walt Whitman, Carlyle and Pater, Ruskin and George Meredith; in the arch-destroyer of Bumbledom who wrote "Oliver Twist," and the writer of "The Newcomes" and of "The Book of Snobs"; in Swinburne's "Songs before Sunrise" and Christina Rossetti's "Royal Princess," Thomas Hardy's "Gabriel Oak," George Gissing's "Thyrza" and Miss Thackeray's "Reine"; in the poets of "The Earthly Paradise" and "The Burden of Nineveh," and in that most Christian poet who gave us the divine Pompilia, the child of the gutter. We find it in Keble, who touched with immortal grace "the trivial round, the common task," and in Rudyard Kipling, who has written of all tasks, national and individual, a consecration earnest, versatile, and actual. It is as truly present in the "Ecce Homo" of Professor Seeley as in Robert Louis Stevenson's "Portraits and Memories." And it is strikingly incarnate in the early novels of Mrs. Gaskell, in the songs and social romances of "Parson Lot," in the democratic hexameters and the satirical "New Decalogue" of that Thyrasis who was commemorated by the scourger of the Philistine; and—for there is no question of great or little—in George Eliot's "Adam Bede," in Tennyson's "Enoch Arden," and in Miss Mulock's "John Halifax." Nor must it be forgotten that, as a matter of fact, "John Halifax" preceded that almost perfect novel, George Eliot's masterpiece. Before either "Adam Bede" or "Enoch Arden" had enriched

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an unimaginative Church with studies of those very callings of carpenter and fisherman which that Church had professed to revere in her Founder and chief Apostle, while she trampled and patronised them among her own "common people," Miss Mulock, in this beautiful and unaffected story of one who, working with his hands, was also the servant of a trade, had already redeemed, from the accretions of the prim and artificial eighteenth century,

"The grand old name of Gentleman."

There are novels, such as Mrs. Gaskell's "*Cranford*" and "*Wives and Daughters*," or Thackeray's "*Philip*," which, in a quite peculiar degree, win the heart of the reader to the man or woman who wrote them. Such a book is "*John Halifax*." It cannot boast the inimitable pathos and humour of "*Cranford*," nor the mastery of the hand that wrote "*Philip*"; but it has all the qualities of its defects, and perhaps full justice has never yet been done to that mingling of austerity and passion, that single-minded economy of language, which of themselves go far to justify its extraordinary and lasting popularity. It is a fine and womanly bit of work in the best sense of the words.

It may, indeed, be said to miss no essentially feminine grace except the crowning grace of humour, that surpassing and Shakespearian gift of creative humour which has for ever given to George Eliot her pre-eminent place. Its very limitations are an intrinsic part of its success. Only in work of the very highest quality, such

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work as the plays of Shakespeare or the novels of Sir Walter Scott, can the bizarre incongruities and ironies of life be amply included without disturbing that sense of harmony and repose so necessary to the highest art. From "John Halifax" it may almost be said that humour, in the widest sense of the word, is absent. The atmosphere being more or less that of romance, the elements are few and easily fused; and so it comes to pass that artistic unity is instinctively and lightly attained, without that constant triumph over obstacles which is the part of commanding genius. Its charm is that of a noble and single-minded sincerity, and of that untutored poetry which, never seeking to pass its boundaries or to strain after effect, has its own distinction of fine and simple phrasing, and achieves what more complicated and ambitious efforts could not have touched. It is a pastel sketch in which the colours are translucent and delicate, rather than an elaborate oil-painting on a crowded canvas.

Yet it is significant that Miss Mulock, who as a rule wrote with extreme ease and rapidity what met the need of the moment, and, having fulfilled its purpose, may be forgotten, spent much more than her usual pains over this the most enduring of her novels, and was content to write and rewrite again and again, rather than risk a blurred or imperfect impression of the truth which she desired to make concrete. Possibly this may have been one reason, among others, why "John Halifax" was always her own favourite among her books. Dr. Garnett has spoken of it as "a

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very noble presentation of the highest ideal of English middle-class life," and that ideal has since entered so closely into the very warp and woof of customary thought and action that its truths sometimes seem to us to have become truisms. It has doubtless done its work the more inwardly and irrevocably, because it was singularly free from the one-sided cant that sometimes flaunts itself under a democratic name. Miss Mulock evidently agreed with Clough that many men and women of lowly birth, and yet more lowly calling, are sometimes the very "poets of courtesy," yet she made Phineas Fletcher admit, with her evident approval, what a writer merely playing to the gallery would have been careful to ignore, though it is a fact in which lies much of the deepest pathos of poverty's daily restrictions. "My father," said Phineas, "tanner as he was, and pertinaciously jealous of the dignity of trade, yet held strongly the common-sense doctrine of the advantages of good descent; at least, in degree. For since it is a law of nature, admitting only rare exceptions, that the qualities of the ancestors should be transmitted to the race, the fact seems patent enough, that even allowing equal advantages, a gentleman's son has more chances of growing up a gentleman than the son of a working man."

Phineas was right when he said "common-sense"; a certain sweet reasonableness and sound common sense were especially characteristic of the author of this book. But to say that, is not by any means to account entirely for its popularity

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and staying power. For may not as much be said of many kindly souls who have written only platitudes, and have quickly wearied their audience? What then was the real reason why its success was so rapid and so lasting? If it be said that the true explanation is twofold, and lies as much in the terse poetic directness of expression as in the power of the elemental truth expressed, it may well be answered that such a twofold answer is essentially one, since it is a commonplace, as true as it is trite, that language, if it be not self-condemning in affectation, is always shaped by that which lies beneath it; and indeed the exception is no exception, but only the most glaring example of all, for who would not suspect a pose under the garb of an attitudinising verbiage? There is in "John Halifax" no such histrionic posing, but, on the contrary, a singular unity of form and feeling. The appreciation of motive and of style, therefore, in this instance necessarily intermingle, though they must, in this as in every careful analysis, be momentarily disentangled.

Without going so far as one recent critic, who has even ventured to hint that the book might be placed in the same category with the "Imitation" of Thomas à Kempis and "The Pilgrim's Progress" of John Bunyan, it may at least be near the truth to maintain that it endures by reason of something more vital than mere choice and mastery of words.

It accords with the fashion of our age to deny that there is any reality above or beyond literature; but literature is the fruit of that covenanted effort,

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which, though a part of the world's testament, is not of itself the immortal heritage testified. Sincerity and inevitableness give distinction to any writing destined to live upon that record; and that this charming idyll of the tanner's apprentice does bear the essential sign-manual can hardly be doubted, except by a criticism so shallow and supercilious as to overreach its own justification.

Its outward presentment has a certain classic grace of unadorned plainness, not deficient either in force or in sweetness, but the secret of its immediate welcome and lasting charm lies in the soul of the book, and is of its very substance. It answers to those deepest needs of the human heart which are the same everywhere and always. It is a response to the question asked anew with fuller and deeper meaning in each succeeding generation: "How can I so obey the Master as to live the eternal life of Love and Beauty, amid all the thwarting elements of time and space and mortality, and find in the divine brotherhood of all men a daily fact which shall transfigure the lowliest labour to the highest poetry, and shine through the darkest grief with illuminating joy?"

Here we touch the very heart of the world's debt to the author of "John Halifax," and, through her, to one in whose teaching she, like Kingsley, delighted, one who, through his deep influence on a chosen few, is influencing an ever-widening multitude, and whose faith was as child-like and practical as it was mystic and scholarly—that most catholic and chivalrous of prophets, Frederick Denison Maurice, among whose disciples

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in Vere Street and Lincoln's Inn Miss Mulock was frequently to be found.

But the story of John Halifax is very far indeed from being merely didactic. It is as remarkable for its simple passion as for the sanity and delicate courage of its high and pure ideal.

From this verdict many will dissent. Much of the criticism of to-day is so eager to be "modern" that it makes the word "passion"—a word of high tradition and noble usage—a mere synonym for corruption and lawlessness; but such a view may almost be said to be Puritanism turned inside out, and as narrow as the bigotry which mistakes coldness for innocence and confounds negation with divinity.

That emotion, the most profound and vital and enduring, is also the simplest and the most reticent, and that the silent Cordelia thrills to an intense and heartrending tragedy, of which slighter and more voluble natures are incapable, may or may not be true; but classic art has always leaned in the direction of that belief, and to the faith that such feeling is at once strong enough for renunciation and vivid enough to strike the chords of passion and of deathless hope.

There is a notable passage in "Modern Painters" in which Ruskin expounds that quality of chastened art which touches the highest possibility of our nature by a note of temperate self-restraint, implying an infinite reserve of power and a rigorous choice of expression. He reminds us that it is perhaps akin to that hint of a divine refraining from any monotony of splendour or reckless and

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unvaried gorgeousness, whereby the lily-of-the-valley may exceed in exquisite loveliness many flowers more exuberant in their blossoming and more magnificent in their tints.

And that the absence of complexity and of much very vivid dramatic colour was in "John Halifax" more or less deliberate, becomes strikingly evident to any one who has any acquaintance with the somewhat florid style of Miss Mulock's previous novel, "The Ogilvies," published by Messrs. Smith and Elder in 1849, and among the most successful of her previous stories. The latter, though full of warmth and vigour, is as rhetorical as it is earnest, and even somewhat girlish in the unchecked ardour of its rhapsodies and the appeals to Heaven and to the reader in its unreserved soliloquising. Interesting it undoubtedly is, and to readers of "John Halifax" especially interesting; for it shows clearly that already the central idea of the later novel was unconsciously shaping itself in the mind of the writer, as, for instance, when she speaks of Mr. Frederick Pennythorne as "too ordinary and vulgar-minded for a gentleman, and far—oh, far—too mean in heart and soul for the noble title of a man." But the advance made in the book by which she is mainly remembered, and with which we are chiefly concerned, is little short of amazing; and it is an advance almost entirely in the direction of self-restraint and brevity.

It is just another instance of what Pater long ago insisted upon, the fact that beauty of style is simply the outcome of beauty in the thought

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to be expressed, such as includes high-minded veracity, and a literary conscience pledged to regard no scruple as too minute for consideration and no faintest shade of difference as unimportant, in the service of a many-sided truth. Tawdry language or reckless elaboration would have been peculiarly out of place in a literary venture which aimed at the expression of a truth at once primitive and fundamental. In claiming integrity for commerce, and dignity for manual labour, it was a wise instinct that opposed itself to all the facile wordiness of the typical demagogue.

So quietly and successfully has the book done its work in the forty-two years which have elapsed since publication, that we at this day fail to realise the strength of illogical and social prejudice which in the preceding century so successfully ostracised every form of trade. Jane Austen, who preceded Miss Mulock by more than one generation, has given us a vivid and convincing picture of the society in which she moved. Her creations are real men and women, and they are always either amusing or interesting, but, whether they be as silly and vulgar as Mrs. Bennet, or as sensible and well-bred as the clear-headed and warm-hearted Elizabeth, they all of them play their cards in polite drawing-rooms to which the Apostle Peter himself would never have been admitted as an equal guest if he had happened to carry a few nets over his arm, and where the angel who took the place of Theocrite might for hours have knocked vainly for admission if he had chanced to be seen mending shoes or standing behind the counter.

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Perhaps, to speak the whole truth, our appreciation of Jane Austen's admirable workmanship and delightful personality is so devout, and we love her Anne Elliot, her Elizabeth Bennet, and her Emma *par excellence*, with so tender a regard, she is herself at once so human and so refined, so sensible and so high-minded, that we shrink with an unconfessed cowardice from noting the limitations of her horizon. In dramatic skill and verisimilitude Miss Mulock cannot for a moment compete with her; but, though Jane Austen was so good and sweet a woman, in spiritual imagination she stands easily surpassed; and it may even be doubted whether the excessive adulation that is sometimes bestowed upon her may not be partly the effect of our decadent fashion of regarding a too definite idealism as priggish and obsolete. The patronising air with which "John Halifax" is handed over to Sunday schools does probably, unconsciously, owe something of its superciliousness to the influence of a literary clique, by whom an anarchical pessimism is regarded as the hallmark of culture, and a too definite Christianity is treated as the last resort of fools.

When this time of transition has passed, it is possible that a more impartial justice will be done to the precision and beauty of language which mark the opening chapters of this fascinating story. Here and there the conversations are touched perhaps with a certain quaint bookishness of which Ibsen has excellently rid the plays and novels of our own time, but that was an occasional characteristic which the writer shared with almost

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all her contemporaries, and even Ethel Newcome now and then "talked like a book"; nor can it be contended even to-day that we all scatter brilliant aphorisms in our ordinary talk quite so frequently as the men and women in George Meredith's romances. But this slightly self-conscious correctness of conversation, though at the very opposite extreme from the epigrams of "The Egoist" or of "Diana," is not a very serious fault, if it be indeed the worst that can be urged.

Though no one can accord to the second half of the story the same degree of admiration that is given to the first, it must be remembered that the achievement at which it aimed was one of peculiar difficulty. To express the beauty of Christianity through all the complexities of social and of family life, and, with all the details of an ordered domesticity, to draw the ideal husband and father and citizen without ever missing the note of reality, on the one hand, or the canons of an exacting art upon the other, was a task that might well tax such commanding genius as Mrs. Craik's best friends have never claimed for her. The second part of "John Halifax" has not the exquisite charm which in "Marius the Epicurean," for instance, irradiates every detail of life with a beauty which is of itself a note of disciplined idealism, and should be an especial note of Christianity, but it may well be borne in mind that "John Halifax" has entered deeply into the life and work of innumerable men and women who would have turned with impatience from a single page of Walter Pater. How wide and incalculable its

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influence has been is suggested by the fact that Americans who in visiting England make their first pilgrimage to Stratford-on-Avon, often make their second to the home of John Halifax at Tewkesbury.

Mrs. Craik's own birthplace of Stoke-upon-Trent was a much less delightful town. It is in the heart of the "Potteries"—"the Black Country" as it has sometimes been called, though it may have been a little less black perhaps in those early days of the century than in these. This so-called "Black Country," however, which kindles grim imaginings by its great furnaces, where the kilns spit flames upon the darkness, has here and there many fine bits of country, where wildflowers grow lavishly in the intervening oases amid the monotonous desolation.

Stoke is not very far from the beautiful grounds of Trentham Hall, where such a practical and necessary protest has been made against the murderous and crippling lead-poisoning of the neighbourhood; the Duchess of Sutherland, with a good sense worthy of John Halifax himself, having led the movement in favour of earthenware manufactured without the poisonous glaze which has hitherto been eating into the brain-power and nerve-power of the poor blinded pottery folk. When "John Halifax" was written, this injury to health and life had not yet been laid bare by the advance of medical knowledge, nor had purchasers—to say nothing of employers of labour—awakened to a sense of their responsibility in such matters.

It was eleven years after the battle of Waterloo, and six years before the passing of the Reform

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Bill, before Chartism had yet been heard of, when hardly a decade had passed since Miss Austen's death, and when Queen Victoria and George Eliot were both little girls of seven years old, Charlotte Brontë a child of ten, and Thackeray a boy of fifteen, that, in the little town of Stoke-upon-Trent, in the home of an obscure and somewhat eccentric minister named Thomas Mulock, the heart of a burdened and sorrowful wife was cheered by the coming of a daughter, a little brown-haired, grey-eyed daughter, who was named Dinah. Thomas Mulock was a man of considerable gifts and literary attainments, and he wrote and preached with effect, but he had little idea of providing for those of his own house. His daughter grew up to be her mother's dauntless and tender protector, at once nurse and breadwinner, and finally carried that mother off, with her two boys, to make a new home for her in London, where she faced honest poverty with the pride and silence of the true "gentylness" and the high-spirited courage which perhaps came to Dinah Mulock as a part of the maternal heritage. It will be noted that the writer who claimed for the tanner's apprentice a refinement above all charlatanry, and pictured him as the nobler for his honest trade, and as finding his highest opportunities in the calling which was his hardest daily sacrifice, could make her protest with the better grace from the fact that she herself had never come under the silly coldness, or vulgar patronage, with which it was in those days too much the fashion to alienate mercantile pursuits.

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Mrs. Craik, then Dinah Mulock, seems to belong so entirely to our own time that we are a little apt to forget, perhaps, how different was the England of her childhood from the England of to-day.

She was already four years old before any railway had yet cut into the heart of the leafy green country or defiled that valley of the silver Trent in which lay her home, and the canals which intersected Stoke must have been the scene of much peaceful coming and going of heavily laden barges. She was only two or three years old when, in two succeeding years, the Test and Corporation Acts and Roman Catholic disabilities were repealed. These were the days of Daniel O'Connell's agitation for the repeal of the Union; and the passing of the Reform Bill, the Abolition of Slavery, and the new Poor Law, all came soon afterwards in rapid succession, before Dinah was nine years old, and probably were of more influence on her environment than the accession of William IV., in 1830, when she was still a very little child, or even the opening of the first railway in the same year. She was thirteen when the penny post was introduced, and still a girl of twenty when in the year of the Irish Famine the Corn Laws were abolished. Eleven years later came the horror of the Indian Mutiny, close upon the heels of the Crimean War; and she lived through the ferment of the second and third Reform Bills, the passing of the Education Act, the Abolition of the University Tests, and the proposal for Home Rule made by Mr. Gladstone,—in a word, it may

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be said that, with the one important exception of the French Revolution, her life was touched by almost all that was most eventful in that eventful century, that Victorian Age which has been summed up as "the age of sociology." Her own life was not uneventful, and not wanting in the practical poetry which is better than mere romance; but it can only be given in barest outline, for she held that the world at large had no right to cross the threshold of a woman's home for any other reason than that of personal friendship, and that gratitude for her writing, if she happen to be a writer, is best shown by respecting the modesty of her reserve. To quote words lately spoken by one who knew her intimately: "There never was a more tender or domestic nature, or one that would shrink more from anything like 'making a life of her.'"

And perhaps at this point it may be permissible to add the dictum of her friend Dr. Garnett, who wrote in the "Dictionary of National Biography": "She was not a genius, and she does not express the ideals and aspirations of women of exceptional genius: but the tender and philanthropic, and at the same time energetic and practical, womanhood of ordinary life has never had a more sufficient representative."

To those who know the difficulty of such a career, it is amazing to think of a simple, untried girl as coming up from the country to London with three others dependent on her pen (her mother and two young brothers), and facing the world for them without any assured income, though one of the three was an invalid and needing special care.

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But from the first she wrote easily and rapidly, and working not for fame but in the determination to bear her own burden and the burden of those she cared for, she won the reputation for which there had been no petty struggle or selfish striving ; and from a single-minded desire to deliver her own earnest and unaffected message, she achieved a much wider and more lasting recognition than many who have aimed at distinction and toiled for immortality.

Mrs. Oliphant, who was her friend and contemporary, tells how Miss Mulock was only twenty-three at the time of her first important publication, and how it was long before that age that her independent career had begun, and that, having rescued the frail mother from the father "of brilliant attainments," she had, as by a miracle, in the great desert of London, managed to keep the little household going, through magazine work of various kinds, from the fashion-books upwards. Another lifelong friend has whispered to the writer of this article that the bread she was able to win for them all at first was sometimes, very literally, only bread. Perhaps that was one reason why later in life, when after her marriage she had her own spacious home and sufficient wealth, in all her delicate generousities and endless plottings for the pleasure of those less rich than herself, she always knew just where the poverty pinched, and used her carriage for the very people who needed it most ; to the last using an omnibus for herself, whenever that was possible, that she might the oftener have the luxury of choosing for more ailing people more luxurious chariots.

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Through all her life her generous kindness knew no bounds, and often was the more touching from the fact that it was not the careless giving of the spendthrift but the hard-won privilege of economy, foresight, self-denial. Like Mrs. Ewing's Madam Liberality, she hoarded the plums in her cake for other people, and managed her affairs with order and precision that she might never be hampered by sordid anxiety or petty selfishness.

Through a wise carefulness, she attained more and more to what has been called "the higher carelessness," and, in her later years in the midst of a methodically managed household which owed its smoothness and comfort to her forethought, never suffered herself to be fretted by trivial worries or unforeseen details.

She was an excellent woman of business, and it is interesting to learn, from the friends of her youth, that these gifts of exactness and order and method were developed gradually as life went on, and that the very people who testified to them would, in her girlhood, have described her as somewhat "happy-go-lucky."

Her memories of her earliest home made any form of debt seem to her the one impossible indignity, and in her resolute unflinching avoidance of it, through the first years of struggle for those she loved, she attained the new powers and faculties which eased the strain of existence, and the admirable poise and harmony of her life lent itself more and more to all that surrounds a woman with beauty and with peace.

But to go back for a moment to the days when

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Mrs. Oliphant describes her as a "young heroic creature writing her pretty juvenile nonsense of love and lovers, in swift, unformed style, as fast as the pen could fly, to get bread for the boys and a little soup and wine for the invalid over whose deathbed she watched with impassioned love and care—a tragic, tender picture, to be associated by ever so distant a link with inane magazines of the fashions and short-lived periodicals unknown to fame." *

She lived then in Mornington Crescent, in the north of London, towards Camden Town, until, after her success as an author was assured, she moved to Wildwood, a cottage at North End, on the Golder's Hill side of Hampstead.

She was surrounded by friends, and one who had known her from the time when she was herself a girl of fifteen, Miss Mulock being a year or two older, has pretended a little playful resentment at what, to her thinking, was not quite accurate in some of Mrs. Oliphant's allusions to the "bevy of attendant maidens" who seemed to make a kind of guard of honour about her. "Many friends indeed she had," says this old friend, "but the friendship was in many cases an equal one, 'the true reciprocity,' implying no patronising airs on the one hand, no excessive dependence on the other." And then she went on to say that, at the time when "John Halifax" was being written, she and another of these old comrades, no longer then in their first girlhood, were at that time sharing a home with Miss Mulock, and teased and criticised

* *Macmillan's Magazine*, December 1887.

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her and "her dear John" most unmercifully as the "proofs" of the book came in, themselves helping with the corrections. No one knew then, of course, whether it would succeed or not.

But what does seem to have been true in Mrs. Oliphant's picture, and what, after all, dwells most happily in the reader's mind, is that it was of the "talents and accomplishments" "of other ambitious and admiring girls" that "Miss Mulock had always tales to tell, with an enthusiasm not excited by any success of her own." She was always a centre of sympathy, of help, and of counsel. And while her own talk was so full of the charms and interests of others, Dr. Garnett tells how charming she was herself, and how her "simple cordiality, staunch friendliness, and thorough goodness of heart perfected the fascination." The sweetness of her singing was a great pleasure to her friends, and her voice lasted well. She was of the musical temperament, and delighted in the best music, but the circumstances of her life had prevented her from gaining the accomplishment of finished playing. More than one of her friends has noted that she had that "taking" gift in a woman, a beautiful hand. Very capable hands they were too, though it was later in life that she became, like George Eliot and many other able women, an exquisite needle-woman; in the early days of struggle there was no time for that. Her handwriting was small and delicate and neat. Like many others who have written much, she never sat at a table to write. She just held a little block in her hand, as near to

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her eyes as she could, and scribbled away in any convenient corner. She was not among those who make a fuss about their "work." In one sense it came to her very easily, and always had done; but she was untiringly diligent, as her very numerous volumes of prose and verse will at once suggest. There seems to have been in her character a certain self-reliance and sureness of touch, a modest self-dependence, or even self-confidence, which is certainly at the very opposite pole from egotism or vanity. If she played or sang or entertained, she merely did her best, and gave herself no petty anxiety as to the effect produced. This may have been one reason perhaps why, without being a brilliant talker, when she did speak, what she said was always neatly turned and to the point. Possibly this attitude of mind was made the easier from the fact that she had not that painfully quick sense of the ridiculous which often makes a more complicated nature self-critical and self-torturing. This freedom from self-regarding regrets, together with her constant consideration for others, and thoughtful common sense, must have made her a singularly restful companion.

She first came to London about 1846, and she had been fortunate in the fact that one of her friends, Charles Edward Mudie, came up at about the same time, and another, Alexander Macmillan, rather later. One created "Mudie's Library," and the other became the head of the great firm which still bears his name, and in which Mr. Craik was for many years a partner. Both, as Dr. Garnett points out, were able to help her.

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It was, however, through another friend, no other than Mrs. Oliphant herself, that, at a little dinner-party given for that purpose, she was introduced to Mr. Henry Blackett as a possible publisher for "John Halifax." That novel was published on generous terms by Messrs. Hurst and Blackett in 1857, and proved an instantaneous success. It was warmly welcomed throughout England, and in America (as has been pointed out in an appreciative introductory note to one of the many editions) its "rare qualities and their actual significance were more clearly understood and appreciated than they have ever yet been in England."

In this "appreciation" we have a most interesting and succinct account of how the book came to be written. The success of the three previous novels—"The Ogilvies," "Olive," and "The Head of the Family"—had opened to the author all doors "in all grades of English life," and, though herself an earnest Churchwoman, it seemed to her at that day that among the Quakers she could best find that type of simple and ideal Christianity lived "in the spirit of Paul the Tent-maker," which was what she now wished to portray. She had already "found her models and sketched her characters,"—"she always said that Ursula was the only copy from nature she ever made"—when, while visiting some of her friends in the neighbourhood of Cheltenham and Stroud, she happened to drive over to Tewkesbury, and of that eventful afternoon, as described by Mrs. Oliphant from the notebook of one of the

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friends in question, we are permitted by the courtesy of Messrs. Macmillan to give the following account:

"In the summer of 1852," said this friend, "she one day drove over with me to see the quaint old town of Tewkesbury. Directly she saw the grand old Abbey and the mediæval houses of the High Street, she decided that this should form the background of her story, and like a true artist fell to work making mental sketches on the spot. A sudden shower drove us into one of the old covered alleys opposite the house, I believe, of the then town clerk of Tewkesbury, and as we stood there, a bright-looking but ragged boy also took refuge at the mouth of the alley, and from the town clerk's window a little girl gazed with looks of sympathy at the ragged boy opposite. Presently the door opened, and the girl appeared on the steps, and beckoned to the boy to take a piece of bread, exactly as the scene is described in the opening chapters of 'John Halifax.' We had lunch at the Bell Inn, and explored the bowling-green, which also is minutely and accurately described, and the landlord's statement that the house had once been used by a tanner, and the smell of tan which filled the streets from a tan-yard not far off, decided the trade which her hero was to follow.

"She made one or two subsequent visits to further identify her background, and the name of her hero was decided by the discovery of an old gravestone in the Abbey churchyard, on which was inscribed 'John Halifax.' She had already

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decided that the hero's Christian name must be John, but the surname had been hitherto doubtful."

It may be added that Longfield is drawn from Detmore House, near Cheltenham; and we are assured that Rose Cottage and Enderley Flat were "copied exactly from Amberley Common, near Stroud."

In all talk with those who were intimate with Mrs. Craik, such talks as have been a necessary preparation for this slight introduction to "John Halifax," always the most touching and beautiful facts were those which might not be written of her, though they have necessarily coloured the whole tone of the article. One such fact especially has impressed itself indelibly on the memory, an act of tender and generous maternal thoughtfulness for a young mother and child, involving detailed effort on the part of Mrs. Craik, and of him who was her other self in such matters, and continued daily for many months. This was after her marriage with Mr. Craik in 1865, when she was living in her beautiful home at Shortlands and had adopted a little daughter, so that her heart was brimming over with ever-deepening affection towards all mothers and all children.

It is a pity that because of her extreme reserve in such matters, so many instances of her friendly helpfulness can be only thus distantly alluded to, and must be held as secret as though they were crimes instead of the most gracious of deeds. But an old friend, now a silver-haired grandfather, though the youngest and most energetic of men, has added a pretty touch to this paper

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by telling, with due permission to use it, a little incident of a much more trivial kind, which he has long remembered as characteristic of Mrs. Craik's kindness, a kindness always free from self-consciousness, and almost maternal in its quick and delicate consideration for others. She was no longer a girl at the time when he knew her, but full of charm—not beautiful, yet of a haunting delightfulness—no hard angles in the softly sweeping curves of the tall, slim, graciously rounded figure, the face lighting up sweetly with every passing thought or emotion that flashed its wild-rose colour into the blonde fairness, or glowed in the clear-shining, eagerly responsive eyes,—

“Eyes too expressive to be blue,
Too lovely to be gray,”—

and with a certain firmness in the moulding of the warm red lips, and in the calm brow beneath the soft brown hair just touched with silver.

He, the friend who tells the story, was much younger than she was, and perhaps seemed to her hardly more than a boy in those days, though he admired her greatly. He used to meet her in the house of a well-known novelist and poet, her friend and his. She knew all about his wooing and the betrothal that followed, though neither of them could know then to what ever-deepening joy it led through all his life. It was in the first flush of that happiness that by chance he found himself in the same railway carriage with her on the North London Railway between Camden Road and Richmond, each bound to the same wedding, to

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which they were both invited guests—not his own wedding this time, though all weddings were of extraordinary interest to him just then. He is a prosperous man now, but he was then at the beginning of life with his way still to make, as no doubt she very well knew; and lavender gloves—such gloves as he had bought for the occasion—did not hang on every hedge; they were a shade too small, and he was in danger of ruining them by the plunging in of a good strong masculine hand. Miss Mulock's own hands were not quite so large as his, and she undertook, quite frankly and simply, to try the gloves on herself first, and thereby stretch them to the necessary width. She was then in the heyday of her modest fame, and the pretty good-nature with which it was done made it all a bit of pride and pleasure to the young man; for even friendship has its "trifles light as air" that cling long in the remembrance. When, some years later, he heard of Miss Mulock's own marriage in 1865 with Mr. George Lillie Craik, one of the partners in the house of Macmillan and Co., every detail of the romance was to him of vivid interest.

This marriage, which crowned her life with ever-increasing happiness, made no break in Mrs. Craik's relations with her own publishers, Messrs. Hurst and Blackett, relations which seem to have constituted a very long and pleasant business connection, an instance, as their common friend Mrs. Oliphant has pointed out, of Mrs. Craik's "fidelity to every bond."

In conversation with others of her old friends

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before writing this paper, two points were especially and repeatedly touched upon. First, the modest and businesslike way in which she treated her writing, never talking about it, but when her house was full of guests—guests well cared for in every detail—just slipping out of their ken during the mornings while she achieved her daily stint of work, and then giving herself up to them wholly in the afternoon and evening; and secondly, the endless delight she took in using her carriage for the convenience of those who had no carriage of their own, plotting and counter-plotting sometimes to help three and four sets of people on the same afternoon, till the intricacies of the arrangements made it quite a triumph to bring all to a successful conclusion.

In the possession of more than one of these friends there is a portrait of Mrs. Craik, taken not long before her death. It is a good, sensible, trustworthy face, suggestive of a character entirely free from anything tawdry or meretricious; the hair under the soft lace—she was very fond of lace—is parted smoothly above the wide, tranquil forehead, and the eyes look straight onward with a certain clear steadfastness. Nose, mouth, and chin add to the impression of courage and veracity,—a forcible and well-balanced directness of nature,—and complete an aspect of gentle dignity and repose.

One of her lifelong friends remarked lately: “It was characteristic of her simplicity that she used to say of the little girl adopted soon after her marriage, and who lived to grow up and marry

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into a home of her own : ' I love Dorothy more even than if she were a child of my own ' ; just as though," added the friend in question, " she could possibly know what her love for a child of her own would have been ! "

During all the time of her married life her pension from the Queen was religiously and silently set aside for the service of those who needed it more than herself. For nearly twenty years she lived at Shortlands, beloved and respected by rich and poor.

Mrs. Oliphant, from whose article in their magazine Messrs. Macmillan have kindly permitted me to quote the following paragraph, has written that in 1887 " her medical advisers had enjoined a great deal of rest, with which the pleasant cares of an approaching marriage in the family, and all the necessary arrangements to make the outset of her adopted daughter in life as bright and delightful as possible, considerably interfered. In one attack of breathlessness and faintness some short time before, she had murmured forth an entreaty that the marriage should not be delayed by anything that could happen to her. But even this did not frighten the fond and cheerful circle, which was used to nothing but happiness. On the morning of the twelfth of October, her husband, before going off to his business, took a loving leave of her, almost more loving than his wont, though without any presentiment,—provoking a laughing remark from their daughter, to which Mrs. Craik answered that though so long married, they were still lovers. These were the

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last words he heard from her lips, and no man could have a more sweet assurance of the happiness his tender care had procured. When he came home cheerfully in the afternoon to his always cheerful home, the sight of the doctor's carriage at the door, and the coachman's incautious explanation that 'the lady was dying,' were the only preparations he had for the great and solemn event which had already taken place. He found her in her own room, lying on her sofa, with an awestricken group standing round—dead. She had entertained various visitors in the afternoon. Some time after they were gone, she had rung her bell, saying she felt ill; the servants, alarmed, called for assistance, and she was laid upon the sofa. A few minutes' struggle for breath, a murmur, 'Oh, if I could live four weeks longer: but no matter—no matter,' and all was over. Thus she died as she had lived—her last thought for others, for the bride whose festival day must be overshadowed by so heavy a cloud, yet of content and acquiescence in whatever the supreme Arbiter of events thought right. An ideal ending, such as God grant us all when our day comes."

One who has been already quoted in these pages has himself quoted Claude de Saint-Martin, "the great unknown philosopher," as saying: "Have we advanced one step farther on the radiant path of enlightenment that leads to the simplicity of men?" We answer that it may at least be claimed for the author of "John Halifax" that her footprints led that way.

By public subscription a monument was placed

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in Tewkesbury Abbey to commemorate her name. Most appropriately, as indicating her reverence and her faith, these words from the close of "John Halifax" have been inscribed on the memorial: "Each in his place is fulfilling his day and passing away, just as that sun is passing—only we know not whither he passes: whither we go we know, and the Way we know—the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever."

THE CHILDREN IN GEORGE ELIOT'S STORIES

THERE are few more charming scenes in George Eliot's novels than that in which little Job Tudge plays an important part. "Job was a small fellow about five, with a germinal nose, large round blue eyes, and red hair that curled close to his head." Having wept copiously over his own cut finger, and been taught that such was not the part of a brave Briton, he relieves the tension of that sweetly difficult moment for the two lovers, who have not yet learned how dear they are to one another, when Felix Holt's strong hand has been laid in unspoken comfort on Esther Lyon's delicate fingers, while she tries to falter forth her sense of what has seemed to her his forgetful aloofness.

The graceful, self-centred Miss Lyon was trembling with tears in the presence of Felix Holt's smothered stress of feeling and calm restraint, when little Job looked up by way of attracting attention to himself, exclaiming, "She's tut her finger," and, amid the laughter and withdrawal of hands that followed, replied to Esther's confession that she was a coward: "Zoo souldn't kuy."

Job is only one out of the many delightful children who are found in George Eliot's novels. Either by accident or design, they are often in the near distance in some critical scene, even when, as

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in this instance, they do not actually occupy the foreground.

Milly Barton's children are drawn with such delicate realism, so chary a touch upon the deep well-springs of sacred emotion, that the story leaves in the mind of the reader such an imprint as only a great artist could have achieved. And the same master-hand has drawn for us Marty and Tommy and Tottie in "Adam Bede," who, despite the knee-breeches of the period, are just such children as may be found in country farm-houses to-day.

"Mind what the parson says, mind what the parson says, my lads," said Grandfather to the black-eyed youngsters in knee-breeches, conscious of a marble or two in their pockets which they looked forward to handling a little, secretly, during the sermon.

"Dood-bye, dandad," said Totty; 'me doin' to church, me dot my netlace on. Dive me a peppermint.' . . .

"And when they were all gone, the old man leaned on the gate again, watching them across the lane along the Home Close, and through the far gate, till they disappeared behind a bend in the hedge. For the hedgerows in those days shut out one's view, even on the better-managed farms; and this afternoon the dog-roses were tossing out their pink wreaths, the nightshade was in its yellow and purple glory, the pale honeysuckle grew out of reach, peeping high up out of a holly-bush, and over all an ash or a sycamore

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every now and then threw its shadow across the path. . . .

"The fact was that this Sunday walk through the fields was fraught with great excitement to Marty and Tommy, who saw a perpetual drama going on in the hedgerows, and could no more refrain from stopping and peeping than if they had been a couple of spaniels or terriers. Marty was quite sure he saw a yellow-hammer on the boughs of the great ash, and while he was peeping, he missed the sight of a white-throated stoat, which had run across the path and was described with much fervour by the junior Tommy. Then there was a little green-finch, just fledged, fluttering along the ground, and it seemed quite possible to catch it till it managed to flutter under the blackberry bush. . . ."

And then there is Tommy Bond, who had "recently quitted frocks and trousers for the severe simplicity of a tight suit of corduroys, relieved by numerous brass buttons. Tommy was a saucy boy, impervious to all impressions of reverence, and excessively addicted to humming-tops and marbles, with which recreative resources he was in the habit of immoderately distending the pockets of his corduroys. One day, spinning his top on the garden walk, and seeing the vicar advance directly towards it, at that exciting moment when it was beginning to 'sleep' magnificently, he shouted out with all the force of his lungs—"Stop! don't knock my top down, now!" From that day 'little Corduroys' had been an

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especial favourite with Mr. Gilfil, who delighted to provoke his ready scorn and wonder by putting questions which gave Tommy the meanest opinion of his intellect.

“‘Well, little Corduroys, have they milked the geese to-day?’

“‘Milked the geese? Why, they don’t milk the geese, you silly!’

“‘No? dear heart? Why, how do the goslings live, then?’

“The nutriment of goslings rather transcending Tommy’s observations in natural history, he feigned to understand this question in an exclamatory rather than an interrogatory sense, and became absorbed in winding up his top.

“‘Ah, I see you don’t know how the goslings live. But did you notice how it rained sugar-plums yesterday?’ (Here Tommy’s face became attentive.) ‘Why, they fell into my pocket as I rode along. You look in my pocket and see if they didn’t.’

“Tommy, without waiting to discuss the alleged antecedent, lost no time in ascertaining the presence of the agreeable consequence, for he had a well-founded belief in the advantages of diving into the vicar’s pocket. Mr. Gilfil called it his wonderful pocket, because, as he delighted to tell the ‘young shavers’ and ‘two shoes’—so he called all little boys and girls—whenever he put pennies into it, they turned into sugar-plums or ginger-bread, or some other nice thing. Indeed, little Bessie Parrot, a flaxen-headed ‘two shoes,’ very white and fat as to her neck, always had the

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admirable directness and sincerity to salute him with the question, 'What zoo dot in zoo pottet?'"

Tina, the heroine of "Mr. Gilfil's Love-story," and that enchanting sprig of apple-blossom, the Hetty Sorrel of Adam Bede's earlier love, before sin had darkened and awakened in her the consciousness of a soul within, are both almost as truly children in their dawning and dangerous womanhood as was the immortal Maggie Tulliver herself, in those early days when she inquired anxiously whether Mrs. Stelling was "a cross woman."

Tessa's children are remembered for the wise words they drew from Romola about the happiness that sometimes lies in a difficult choice, and the Garths are altogether normal and delightful children, but it is in the exquisite skill with which George Eliot brings home to us the charm of such everyday babies as Mrs. Poyser's Tottie, and the little grandchild of the Jeromes, in "Janet's Repentance," that this author—herself childless—stands indisputably supreme.

THE WORDS AND WAYS OF CHILDREN

A HARD-WORKED London artist told his friends with great glee one evening that he had had three pieces of luck that day: he had sat opposite to a beautiful face in the Underground Railway; he had been assured by a stranger that he was a good-hearted fellow; and, best of all, he had overheard a little ragged girl saying to herself, over and over again, "Two silver shillings! Two silver shillings!" having come into possession of that magic treasure.

No one was commonplace enough to ask him why the little girl's words should have so tickled his fancy. Silver shillings are common enough, but they may, like other current coin, be transmuted by the glamour of childhood into symbols of happiness itself.

Children have no language which will adequately describe the slowly moving miraculous panorama of their inward visions. Walter Bagehot has expressed this with delightful humour, where he says of this interior existence: "You have war-like ideas, but you cannot say to a sinewy relative: 'My dear aunt, I wonder when the big bush in the garden will begin to walk about; I'm sure it's a Crusader, and I was cutting it all day long with my steel sword. But what do you think, aunt? for I'm puzzled about its legs, because, you see, aunt, it has only one stalk; and besides, aunt,

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the leaves.' You cannot remark this in secular life, but you hack at the invincible bush till you do not wholly reject the idea that your small garden is Palestine, and yourself the most adventurous of knights."

The sense of humour in boys is only equalled by their healthy hatred of all cant and affectation. But perhaps the morbid desire of the sentimentalists to "dee and do nought ava" is beginning to taint even the childhood of this artificial age, for a little boy, lately promoted to knickerbockers, professed at last to have found something to live for. "Nurse," he said, "I don't want to die *now*."

"No, Master Frank, I suppose not; but what makes you say that?"

"Why, Nursie, because of my *braces*!"

Even to healthy-minded children, death, so long as it leaves their own immediate circle untouched, is not seldom an attractive mystery, though I know of one child of five who wept bitterly when the trees in the park near her home were blown down by the wind, and from whom the death of birds and other favourites had to be carefully hidden. Perhaps the loneliness of her childhood increased this sensibility. It was natural that so loving a heart should long for brothers and sisters. She was overheard on one occasion praying: "O God, give me a little brother if it is *necessary*!" "necessity" being to her commensurate with the Divine will.

There are beautiful touches in the religion of children. A certain little dark-eyed boy was stay-

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ing, a while ago, in the same house with a little fair-haired girl called Beatrice, who was several years older than he. She, in her superior wisdom, was to him as a guardian angel, and he, with watchful chivalry, made himself her most patient and lowly servant. He was one of a Sunday class where the children were asked one day what things they should ask God for, the mistress expecting, of course, that they would reply: "For bread, for raiment, for a roof to cover us." A great light came into this boy's black eyes and flashed over his pale face. "For Beatrices," he said.

A well-known writer, who had a special sympathy with children, quotes with approval an essayist, of whom she says: "He considers that children are defective in sensation, that all their perceptions of outward things are far less vivid than those of a grown person, and that they live almost altogether in a world of phantasmagoria, which is much more important to them than anything outward, and which cuts them off from the grown-up people's world."

There is one strong believer in this doctrine who can still remember vaguely—now that she is a child no longer—how, one day, when she had begun to make pot-hooks and round O's, there came over her a dumb, passionate desire to embody in these hieroglyphic signs, which she had seen her elders use on paper, though she was quite unable to express it in spoken words, some record of a lovely pastoral vision which was haunting her. Whether it had come to her in a dream or as a peculiarly vivid waking phantasy, or whether

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it was the memory of some previous existence before the "shades of the prison-house" had begun to close about her, she cannot to this day feel sure. But she can still see in imagination the long, somewhat bare upper room, with its three little white beds, where there came to her the desperate impulse to dash down in lines and circles what she was too shy to express in audible speech, and what, indeed, altogether transcended such possibilities of language as were within her reach. And this shyness was mixed with a scarcely defined belief that this peaceful other-world vision, which was so far removed from her daily experience that it would be treated as idle tales if uttered in her blundering child-language, might possibly gain credence if it could only get itself embodied in written symbols; and then how surprised the elders would be who had not shared with her the fair sights and sounds, and had no idea of the secret treasure which was locked within her memory!

It is all vague and dim to her, like those recollections gathered from yet earlier babyhood, of how one day, when she was crying over a midday siesta, which was at that time prescribed to all children, a companion child, some years older than herself, advised her, in a tone of gentle patronage, to suck her thumb, an anodyne for all troubles, which the young counsellor had found unfailing; or how, on a like melancholy occasion, a kind hand dropped into a little wooden crib, where she lay sobbing, a lovely cowslip ball, its golden blossoms, in their pale green setting, all cool and sweet, and

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smelling of the meadows; or how, when she was nearly three years old, a neighbour made an epoch in her history by giving her, over the low iron railing which divided the two grass plots, a bright blue corncockle from her own garden.

This love of flowers was a strong bond of sympathy between the child and her father. It was he who took her in the early spring-time to the one field down by the river where the wood-anemones grew. It is not often that they are found away from the woodlands, but Twilight's father (that was the nickname he gave her once, though it quickly dropped into disuse) knew one such magical spot where they were as common as cuckoo-flowers. And later—more joyous adventure still!—down by the brown canal, with its endless locks and fairy waterfalls, were found the first dog-roses. Before Twilight could pluck them she must cross a narrow plank over the foaming water; but all was safe in her father's presence; and then there followed the delight of gathering with her own hands, out of the hedge, one of the sweet pale pink buds.

Twilight and her brothers and sisters were not taught theology, but I have heard that when she was asked one day who would take care of her doll while she was away on a visit she replied quite simply: "Oh, dear God, of course."

This doll seems to have been a very lively personage; for Twilight, who had once been dosed with homœopathic medicine, when she was restless in her sleep, is said to have knocked at her mother's bedroom door one morning, and

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when asked what was the matter, said Dolly had been kicking so all night that she must have some "tamomilla." It was only as Dolly grew older that her beautiful blue satin gown was cut up to make a banner for the rifle corps in which her mistress was a volunteer.

It is to be feared that in those days the said mistress was a very boisterous and rather domineering little person, and had to be constantly admonished that she was "not a little boy." She must have been an odd mingling of the mystic and the tom-boy, for about the time when she was given to dressing up as Masterman Ready, playing at pirates, performing circus tricks, and other various and indescribable naughtiness, she employed her quieter moments in drawing imaginary portraits of the fairies who dwelt in the diverse flowers, and on one occasion, when she was unhappy, she comforted herself with the idea that she was visited by an angel. Her parents would scarcely have approved had they known of the elaborate system of penances which she drew up for herself.

She had been reading "Settlers at Home," and she seldom went up and down stairs without a terrible feeling that "Roger," the bad genius of the book, was at her heels. Her self-ordained punishments, therefore, were chiefly journeys up and down the house: for one offence ten runs upstairs, for two faults twenty, and so on.

The first memory of pain in her childhood is of a very curious kind, and may remind us how absurd it is to expect children to appreciate

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the importance of the more serious events of life.

A near relative, who had been very kind to the child, had suddenly died. But the word "death" was only a name to her, and gave no pain. Instead of realising that she would never see again the face she loved, or hear the dear familiar voice, that life would thenceforth be a poorer, blanker thing to her, she felt an odd kind of excitement, and almost elation, at having come in contact with one of the "grown-up" experiences of this troublesome world. But when she rushed into the drawing-room with some trivial remark about black clothes, she perceived, with a pang which has left its memory to this day, that she appeared to her elders to be guilty of a strange heartlessness. The news that her friend was dead—the bright lad who gave her her first book, and was always ready to play with her—that caused her no real suffering; it was not until long afterwards that she understood the sorrow of death. But the discovery that she had wounded and disappointed those she loved by her want of feeling—that gave her unspeakable pain.

To most people the self of to-day is no very ideal person. They realise painfully enough its ignorance and folly. But the self of childhood—that is quite a different matter.

That dream-haunted, high-spirited little romp, far away among the shadows and the blossoms of the past, that is the soul to laugh and cry over—an altogether absurd, loving, grotesque little figure. As we look back, half doubting our own

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identity, we are like a rough workman I know of, who, meeting a mother and child in the streets one day, whispered audibly: "I wish I was as innocent as yon child looks!" We wish we were as free from the hard and selfish spirit of the world as those earnest little souls seem to us to have been.

IN EARLY AUTUMN

AT summer dawn, that makes the world anew
In primal loveliness of Eden's birth,
And bathes the blossoms with the heavenly dew
That gives a daily childhood to the earth,
*When beauty pierces like a beckoning cry,
Oh, let the children share the earth and sky!*

Oh, send them here before it is too late,
While still the swallows dip their wings in light
And every day the sunset's golden gate
Throws wide the splendours of the summer
night!
*Oh, send the children here: the days go by;
Oh, send the frailest quickly, ere they die!*

Snapdragons now are laughing in the hedge,
And thrush to fellow-thrush is jargoning;
The little river running through the sedge
Sings on, while reeds bend over, answering:
*Earth garners loveliness; the days go by:
Leave death for age; the young buds must not
die.*

The harebell leans upon the passing breeze,
And honeysuckles weave their fairy bowers;
Oh, think what joy, among the leafy trees,
For London waifs to pluck the lavish flowers!
*Oh, send the children here: the days go by;
Oh, send the frailest quickly, ere they die!*

IN EARLY AUTUMN

The pine-tree, bathed in sunshine, softly sways
A fragrant censer that will scatter health
To strengthen wanderers in the woodland ways,
And give them store of Nature's living wealth :
Oh, send the children here : the moments fly ;
And, while you pause to think, some child may
die.

The corn has fallen now in sheaves of gold ;
The noonday spaces melt in sapphire deeps :
The distant hills are dreaming, fold on fold,
In dim blue distance where a young moon sleeps.
Oh, send the children here : the days go by ;
Oh, send the frailest quickly, ere they die !

At eve yon moon, a drifting snowflake yet,
Will rise—a silver sickle—o'er the Rose
That scatters petals when the sun hath set ;
And then a million flowers in sleep will close.
Oh, send the frail flowers here who tossing lie
In crowded cities ! Save them, ere they die !

THE OPEN WINDOW

LET us by all means build sanatoria for the consumptive patients whose health we have ruined, and found schools of hygiene for teachers whose constitutions we have undermined! So long as there is still hope of cure or of reform, we shall at least have improved a little on the time-honoured practice of giving handsome burial to the prophets conveniently done to death. But, setting aside the patent fact that consumption and degeneration are likely to claim their victims, so long as thousands of overworked people are denied a living wage, there is, even in the present distress, one initial life-saving reform which costs nothing except common sense and courage, and need not be delayed for the reconstruction of society. The atmosphere of many of our offices, shops, and churches, is often so fetid that any one with a keen sense of smell, entering from the pure air outside, experiences a sense of foulness indescribable; and still more is this true of overcrowded, unventilated trains and omnibuses. Such a person, if he has an even elementary knowledge of the conditions favourable to disease, feels no longer any wonder at the authorised computation in 1906 that, in London alone, no fewer than 80,000 people are stricken with one form or another of tuberculosis, and "16,000 persons die every year whose valuable lives might be saved with proper treatment, to say nothing of the thousands who are slowly moving to their doom."

THE OPEN WINDOW

The grim humour of it all is beyond words. The one means of life which can be neither taxed nor paid for, the one pure element which makes for beauty and vigour and longevity, is treated on all hands as a dangerous enemy to be shut out at all costs throughout the whole of our long winter. Everybody poses on occasion as a devotee of fresh air, but the man, or the woman either, who dares boldly to open a window wide in any public place of resort, is eyed askance and treated with a smothered resentment, a polite hostility, which opens fire with significantly conscious sneezes and coughs, the pulling up of coat-collars and drawing on of mantles, and usually ends by a determined raid upon the offending window which, with an air of virtuous and collective indignation, is too often hastily and decisively closed again. Yet, even apart from the extreme danger to health involved in this worship of stuffiness, had the worshippers only enough knowledge and imagination to picture for an instant the nature of the filth they are swallowing, their disgust would be so overwhelming that they would probably not only open every window, but in many cases make an instinctive rush for the door.

There is tragedy in the accusation so lightly thrown at "the great Unwashed"; for those who make it forget to ask themselves how many of the very poor, in their day-long scramble for bare bread and roof and raiment for their children, have, under existing social conditions, either sufficient bath-rooms or sufficient leisure for civilised grooming. But many of their so-called "supe-

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riors," who plume themselves on their continual tubbing and general devotion to external soap and water, are content to swallow unboiled, not only water from a sewage-polluted river, but air from other people's polluted lungs. Whether or no John Bull continues, with an air of bravado, to drink, without any sufficient precaution, the milk and the water which are seldom technically clean, it is certain that his first step towards the prevention of tuberculosis ought to be a reform of his dirty habits in relation to unclean and noxious air. Such air is almost always germ-laden, but what is emphasised here is not so much its danger to life as its loathsome impurity. Yet at the same time it cannot be wholly forgotten that, for reasons not far to seek, our national scourge of tuberculosis feeds upon the filth of bad air.

YOUNG ART AND MY LITTLE RED RIDING-HOOD

I HAVE seen "Young Art" again to-day, after a long interval, and there was a look in his grave little face that seemed as appropriate as a Christmas carol to the inner meaning of our great festival. There is usually a kind of holy joy about Young Art, even when, as to-day, he has evidently the cares or sorrows of his family much on his mind. I am not sure of his exact age, but it is somewhere between seven and eight, I take it, and even in his "old-fashionedness" he is essentially a child, one of the little ones to whom the "Christ-masse" is especially dedicated. His father—"Art," without the prefix—is beyond the region of my acquaintance, and his mother, who was like the Old Woman who lived in a Shoe, is also outside my circle. With daily work to do it is impossible to know every one, even among the very poor, who have certainly a deeper claim upon time and attention than many of their fortunate neighbours, and perhaps also more vital lessons to teach to those of us who trade mainly in words. Young Art—that is the name by which I hear his family designate him, though I divine that his true patronymic is that of the great Pendragon of the Round Table—Young Art has been bred from babyhood in that saddest, deepest poverty of all which is the result of some one else's wasteful self-indulgence. Already it is plain that he tries to

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guard and cherish his heroic young foster-mother, a woman with a face that in its first youthful contour must have resembled the pure outline of Dinah Morris's gentle countenance. She is his father's sister, and her married life has been one long martyrdom in the cause of ideal womanhood, the continual kindler of the faggots about her burning feet being tied to her by the law of wedlock, and tied equally fast to his own favourite and money-squandering vice. She has no children of her own; Young Art, who was begged from "the Old Woman who lived in a Shoe"—one of a family of fourteen, I think he told me—is the idol of her affections. At her poor, well-brushed hearth, there has always been a welcome also for his brave, handsome young cousin, who has been starving of late in silence with her baby and her "unemployed" husband at a fireless hearth of her own, as I discovered by accident, this bitter cold day; to say naught of the feckless ne'er-do-well nephew, to whom every other door except that of the prison has long since been closed. To these last she is pathetically, unwearyingly kind; but Young Art is the one joy of her meagre and otherwise joyless treadmill. For him she slaves early and late, spending long hours at the wash-tub and the ironing-board, to earn the wherewithal, and keeping the child himself exquisitely neat and, like herself, looking always "clean as a snowdrop." He is never fantastically or gaudily dressed, yet his quaint, smiling gravity and elderly daintiness of perfectly mended apparel, give him somehow the air of a child out of a picture-book, even apart

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from the singular home-made barrow on which, out of school hours, he is so often wheeling home a modest burden of carefully got-up *lingerie*. His manners are distinguished, and quite unlike those of the small rabble with whom he mixes at the Board school, whither, with the other child inhabitants of this hamlet, he daily wends his way. His foster-mother's love is so great that it is itself an education and gives him a kind of royalty, so that he has all the fearless, quiet *savoir-faire* of a gentleman, and, without analysing it to himself, feels somehow that his attentions are welcome. When all the children in our lane, some sixty of them, came for tea in our little backyard, and adjourned with me to the pine-woods afterwards, it was Young Art who quietly managed to reach high enough to slip his little arm through mine and tow me along protectively.

My other guard-of-honour on that occasion was my Little Red Riding-Hood. I think of her as that, because, though she does not wear scarlet, her exquisite beauty would be so perfectly set off by a red cloak and hood, and even more than Young Art she suggests a child out of a Christmas volume. The liquid dark eyes look forth from a little white face, like a delicately cut cameo, where the only touch of colour is in the pretty red lips that are always bravely smiling. The black hair that frames this charming vision is itself a charm, and the child seems to be one of those whose pinafores are always clean. It is her wonderful smile that wins the heart; it seems to bubble up perpetually from some hidden fountain of love and

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light. Even on that saddest morning, when Red Riding-Hood's own hunger was forgotten in that of her starving little gray dog, her smile had not quite vanished. By a happy chance I espied them together, that bitter day, the child and the dog, lingering a moment in wistful silence outside my garden railing. It was then that our real friendship began. Dogs and I are almost always on more or less comradely terms, and when I clapped eyes on the poor little four-legged gray skeleton that piercing winter morning last year, it was for the dog's sake even more than the child's that I rushed away for a bone. Oh, the joy of that bone to all three of us! The poor half-perishing dog never forgot it, nor did the child, nor did I. When the hard time was over, and the poor little bag of skin and bone began to look a real dog once more, he came back again and again alone, without his mistress, to thank me. You say it was for more bones? I shall not be believed, but when I fetched food he withdrew in a dignified manner as much as to say, "You quite mistake me!"

Red Riding-Hood told me soon afterwards, in reply to persistent questioning, that she had had to part with him—a great sorrow, poor little maid! She has many brothers and sisters, and even dogs have mouths when the weekly wage is hardly a "living" one for a family. And the next I heard of him was his death. Only with tears in her eyes could Red Riding-Hood tell me of the horrid disease that compelled his new owners to shoot him, and this tragic explanation of his disease—I

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had supposed at first that he died a natural death—she did not give me until we attained to the intimacy of afternoon tea in my own little study, after she had brought me dahlias, velvet dark and golden bright, in a carefully arranged posy of alternating tints from her own cottage garden.

I had met her a few days earlier carrying a basket of cabbages that looked half as big as herself. When I took it out of her hand and accompanied her to her gate she merely seemed amused, smiling more rapturously than ever. At our parting I rather fished for a "Thank you"; but she reserved that till the afternoon, when she brought the flowers to accompany her sweet dimples and shining eyes as an expression of what she felt.

The labouring people in our lane occasionally make me feel, as this child did, that in matters of neighbourly friendship my methods are coarse in comparison with their delicacy of feeling.

CHILDREN OF THE LONDON AND SOUTH-WESTERN RAILWAY

“HE just said good-night to me, and he gave me a kiss, and said he was coming back to do the garden. But when he got to work an express train came along the line and knocked him over, and I never saw him again alive.” A grave, fair-haired little girl it was who, sitting beside me in the matron’s bright, cosy sitting-room at the orphanage—our orphanage *par excellence* at Woking—thus summed up the epoch in her own history which had opened to her the doors of orphanage hospitality. It was told quite simply, and without any emotional pose, though by no means without a sense of its heartrending pathos, a certain quiet dignity, as of those who have passed through deep sorrow without being embittered. The little garden had sweet-peas in it, I learned—one of the small gardens on the edge of the line near the child’s home at Andover—and there leaped to the eyes visions of the home-life, the mother and children watching eagerly for the return of one whose poor broken body was to be carried back by his mates, but never again to come striding up the staircase of the little house to kiss his small daughter good-night. The child was one of six little girls, of whom two were at the orphanage. I had been interested in hearing about one of the boys in another family, whose father had been run down by an express, when hastening to help a young

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porter in difficulties with a truck of luggage which had overbalanced ; therefore the matron had sent for this child and her sister, and also for another girl, one of ten children, whose breadwinner had been killed in like manner while cleaning down a truck. We think much of the great catastrophes that swallow up passengers, but too little perhaps of the yearly toll of lives among brave and faithful public servants of the rank and file, who meet their summons as a matter of course in the ordinary round of their daily tasks.

Some of the children here lost their fathers in the wrecks of the *St. Hilda* and the *Stella*, both in the company's service ; others in ways less striking to the imagination, but not less sad for those who are left behind.

The men themselves understand well enough the uncertainties and perils of their chosen work, and it is by them that the orphanage is mainly supported and managed.

It is interesting to see that the Archbishop of Canterbury and Lord Meath are among the vice-presidents, and that Lord Aberdeen heads the lists of life-governors, for these are all names which carry with them a guarantee of efficiency and good faith, as apart from mere title ; but it is more interesting still to glance through the names on local committees throughout that part of the country which is served by the London and South-Western, and to note that they consist largely of very lowly workers engaged in the actual drudgery of the railway. In making this honourable provision for their children, it was perhaps hardly

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surprising that they had to concentrate upon obvious necessities rather than on the thought of their playtime. The excellent bath-rooms, first-rate sanitation, and abundant space and air in the sleeping-rooms, might well put to shame many a public school. The wise arrangements for education and the apparent capacity and humanity of the staff may account for the individuality and vigour of the children, and the happy absence of that deadened institutionalised air which is often so depressing where children are herded together in a large "home." Nevertheless, until recently, there had been one serious gap in the beneficent plan of life—the children did not know how to play. In their spare time they sat within four walls in their spacious rooms, without books or toys or occupations, until one day Mr. Cecil Smith opened the door upon them, and stood aghast at the deadly dulness of the scene before him.

His visit inaugurated a new era, for he never rested until he had not only collected a varied and delightful "children's library" and provided outdoor and indoor games, but had also organised the Children's Fund, of which the working expenses are privately met, with the happy result that every penny subscribed goes to benefit these orphan boys and girls.

I found it a very pretty sight to watch the children drilling, and I hear that Mr. Cecil Smith, "the Children's Friend," as their annual report names him, is already dreaming of a gymnasium, where such training will be extended and amplified directly the fund allows of it. I need hardly say

SOUTH-WESTERN RAILWAY CHILDREN

how glad he will be to give full particulars of all the work of the fund to any one who writes to him at the orphanage, where he is continually in and out. This fund maintains and equips the orphanage boy scouts' and lads' brigade, arranges small entertainments and lantern lectures given monthly throughout the winter, keeps library and games up to the mark, making good the necessary wear and tear, and providing the children with stationery, magazines, and prize awards. We read that it is proving of the utmost value, and is sensibly and carefully administered. It has, moreover, given to rooms that were somewhat bare and formal a touch of home and of the varied interests in which happy school-fellows and comrades may take part. Perhaps as we whiz by on the railway lines, looking out on the orphanage and remembering that it is a solid monument of co-operative thrift on the part of the railway-men to whom we constantly entrust our lives, we may well ask ourselves whether we owe no debt either to the children of our hard-worked brothers or to Him who said: "Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these, my brethren, ye have done it unto me."

FROM A COTTAGE WINDOW

STRAY oak-leaves, brown, and light as a feather, still now and then whirl one by one past my window, but for the most part the trees have already lost all their foliage and attained to the beauty of "glorious nakedness." The ivied bank, that overleans the other side of the lane opposite my little sitting-room, still casts a shadow, but the two ancient trees that stand guard beside it are now already bare, except for their ivied stems, and the unclothed boughs begin to leave the over-shadowed rooms more air and light. The swinging sign of the little inn is already visible in the distance, and, beyond it, the silvery birches and black pines, and a space of south-western sky, whence the golden sunsets are mirrored from the west on "soft" evenings and the stars look down in blessing.

The dahlias are all gone, and the chrysanthemums—which have done finely this year—will soon be following them.

By strange chance, just as that sentence was set down on paper there came a rhythmic rat-tat on the cottage door, and a messenger from Hoe Place brought—accompanied by a basket of apples, themselves a picture—as though to tell me that chrysanthemums must not be banished before their time, a great bunch of the beautiful creatures, more perfect, in their air of stately quietude and lavish yet delicate tints, than any that have entered

FROM A COTTAGE WINDOW

my room this season; whole sprays of snowy-white, and pink things of paler hue on the under-side of the lovely curling petals—all with that graceful drooping curve so different from the rigidity of their old-fashioned forerunners—and others of pale yellow, a clever effect in the colour-scheme, leading up to what is the crowning note of the harmony, an upright blossom, in the vivid gold of its plume-like aspect much like a colt's-foot, side by side with a cluster of prim daisy-shaped beauties with wide yellow bosses rayed round with petals of sea-shell pink, a sort of glorified Michaelmas daisies. There they all are, looking at me now from the great blue and white pot that was the gift of a friend just come back from the edge of the "Undiscovered Country." And if they were not grown out of doors, they are still unmistakable chrysanthemums. Against my whitewashed walls and the black-brown of my stained deal bookshelves they are superb. There seems to have been a convergence of gift-bringing influences upon this spot of earth to-day, for only half an hour before, the village policeman, our chief gardening enthusiast of the neighbourhood, whose fairy triangle at the road-corner is bare at last of all its fiery blooms and has been patiently dug over for the winter, came modestly to the back door on the other side of the cottage with a great handful of precious bulbs, and we had a little talk about the slips of sweet-briar that had withered in the summer sun through being set too early: November, this learned man tells me, is the right month.

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The gardens just now have a very appealing aspect ; poor Psyche has come to the long trial of sorting the seeds, and soon will be falling asleep. But the skies of evening look down with miraculous beauty. Never are sunsets more mystically glorious than when the golden light looks through the bare tree-branches, as through the bars of some heavenly window, only to be flashed back again by the depths of a brimming stream brown and tranquil after the autumn rains. Down at Hoe Place, two days ago, just such a sunset as that looked in through the wide drawing-room windows as I ceased reading that fine passage from Lord Lytton's "Letters" in which he sums up the meaning of tragedy as "the highest expression in art of that which in life itself . . . compels us to understand, not as an abstract proposition, but as a truth delivered through our strongest emotions, that Divine justice is not concerned about bringing things to a comfortable conclusion at the end of this poor little five-act play of ours—that its theatre is Infinity, and its last word here 'Beyond.'"

It is a good message to have by heart before those benumbing days come of which Mr. Robert Bridges writes :

"The long dark night, that lengthens slow,
Deepening with Winter to starve grass and tree,
And soon to bury in snow
The Earth, that, sleeping 'neath her frozen stole,
Shall dream a dream crept from the sunless pole
Of how her end shall be."

But in the darkening days the birds just now

FROM A COTTAGE WINDOW

are full of charm to eye and ear. We are only twenty-four miles from London. In the morning yesterday I watched the quiet little grey-bosomed bird that was tame enough to sit on the leafless topmost twig of my little plum-tree, looking in through my upper window, about half a yard from my observing eyes, as I listened to the fluting, Mozart-like melodies of a hidden robin; and in the afternoon, as I crossed Waterloo Bridge, I gazed on the restless sea-gulls, making poetry with their great white wings, hovering and sweeping above the dark river. On the return journey the birds had gone, but a new token of hope had taken their place, for the lights above the Southern Wharf were golden in the autumn mist and made a glowing, burning radiance in the Thames below. And there came back to me the words of a brave symbolist whom I knew in my youth, an arch-heretic whose fame is now blazoned by the orthodox forces that cursed him before they built his tomb, and I murmured to myself those lines of Thomas Toke Lynch that are welcome with the coming of winter :

“ While the root, locked in slumber fast,
Rests through the weary winter-tide,
The world speeds on, that God at last
His summer’s heartsease may provide,
And all love’s tender prophecies
In tenderer blooms may realise.”

HIS SOLILOQUY

(*A Dramatic Lyric*)

HUSH ! it is night,
And the stars
Look down thro' the prison-bars
That hold us a world apart—
You in the infinite light, I in my darkened heart.
Is there a gulf we may cross
To win a moment again,
You to your terrible loss, I to my exquisite pain ?
Is there a gulf we may cross,
Or has our love been in vain ?—
I live for you, die for you, daily, you who are
pure and good !
But not with a touch will I stain
Your flower-white womanhood,
I who have soiled my life, soiled and spoiled my
life,
While you, in the sun and rain—
The joy, the sorrow, the strife—
Unfolded your lily-bloom
With its midmost golden dart.
Ah, no ! We are worlds apart.
Yet even here in the night,
In a life that's a prison-room ;
You, the child of the light,
You dwell in my darkened heart,
Heaven in the hell of my doom.

CHRISTINA GEORGINA ROSSETTI

IN a candid and deeply interesting memoir Mr. William Michael Rossetti has brought home to us with added tenderness and reality the vision of "a soul as pure, duteous, concentrated, loving, and devoted as ever uttered itself in prose or verse." These words, from the closing sentence in which Mr. Rossetti sums up his tribute to that sister of whom he had such intimate and lifelong knowledge, come as a relief to the pent-up admiration of his readers at the end of this memoir, a finished and impressive monograph, beautiful with such homely and untold reverence as forbids any language not simple, any overstrained or self-conscious adornment.

These pages enhance our knowledge of Christina Rossetti's devotion to her kindred—most of all to her mother—and in all the details of her daily life, as well as in the moving story of her earthly love, here for the first time fully told—a love not without its heavenly joys and qualities even in renouncement—they are a continual attestation, an attestation not needed and yet delightful, to the profound sincerity of her devotional poems. Built in the Living Rock and smitten to the innermost depths, her life was "hid with Christ in God," and that which she gave so freely to the world was itself a Divine gift, an overflowing energy of faith and love, sometimes thrilled through and through with the very bitterness of grief, yet

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quick with praise through all suffering, and springing ever from that Source of joy which she knew to be at the heart of pain. It is sometimes childlike in its rippling happiness of kinship with birds and beasts and children, but at other times, and much more frequently, it is dazzling in its leaping purity and rainbow-tinted sacrificial passion as it triumphs over all obstacles on its way to the great deep, and not seldom it is when touched with sorrow that it is most full of mystic healing and cleansing power. Do we not all come thirsting to dip our tiny cups in it and bless this well-spring of living water springing up unto eternal life?

Christina Rossetti's deep and fastidious veracity added the final note of distinction to her most enduring verse, verse of which the word "distinction" may be used in a special and primary sense, for she is so "distinct in individualities" that to class her with others, even the greatest, would be to lose sight of one of her most striking attributes; and especially, perhaps, of her religious poems is this true. Here and there we may be reminded of her in Richard Crashaw's "Shepherds' Hymn" and his "Saint Teresa" poems, or in Christopher Smart's splendid "Song to David," and to name her with Henry Vaughan, George Herbert, and William Blake, is to do honour to them as truly as to her; but no one who is intimate with her singing is likely to mistake it for theirs, or for any but her own. To take rank with such poets as these on the one hand, and with the greatest singers of the nineteenth century on the other, is to hold a high and immortal place;

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yet the absolute spontaneity of Christina Rossetti's symbolism, the sense of sweet surprise and inevitableness in her cadences, as of a nightingale's improvisation, with nevertheless that just economy of language and metaphor characteristic of what is final and unfathomable in feeling, must make her appeal a wider and more varied one than that of the Silurist or the author of "The Temple"; while for melody and passion, so married as to be absolutely one, in such poems as "The Convent Threshold," "A Royal Princess," and "The Prince's Progress," it would not be easy to find a lyrist beside whom one need fear to name her, whether among living writers or the mighty dead who preceded them.

In criticising this volume of her "poetical works" from childhood upwards, no one can fail to admit that its contents are extraordinarily unequal, both in outward music and in inward quality; but to say that she numbers among her enthusiastic admirers that great master of melody, who wrote that "consummate mastery of [the poet's] instrument" is "the one indispensable test of poetic triumph," is to give a high authority indeed for the perfection of her workmanship at its best. Yet for her work the word "workmanship" seems misleading; when that work is most perfect it bears rather the impress of a transcendent and irresistible *creation* than of any clumsier process. Take, for instance, the two brief lyrics by which she is perhaps most widely known—"When I am dead, my dearest," and "Does the road wind uphill all the way?"—who shall analyse their haunt-

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ing and satisfying beauty, except to say that their soul and body are absolutely one, and their bareness of redundant loveliness, in word or image, the crowning loveliness of all? In contradistinction from these in its flowing wealth of measure and imagery, though less inscrutable in charm, is the "Amor Mundi." It is interwoven throughout with echoing rhymes and cunning assonances and timely roughnesses of deterrent sound; all breathing the symbolism of a deeper music than that of any audible human voices. It is almost trite to say that Christina Rossetti had her limitations, but it may be added that, by a kind of proud humility—if the paradox be permitted—she seems to have recognised them, and never attempted to pass beyond them into regions not her own. Be that as it may, her brother at once arrests our attention and probably wins our acquiescence, when in writing elsewhere of Augusta Webster's finest play, which was greatly admired by Christina Rossetti, he says of the latter: "The very suggestion of her writing any tragedy, much more any such tragedy as 'The Sentence,' would be preposterous."

"Goblin Market" is a marvel of subtle music and of outpoured sunshine and colour, its "fine fairy-lore" all brimming with such stuff as goes to the making of mortal suffering and heroic tenderness; but it may well indicate something of the width of the poet's range to compare its unfettered methods, as of some heavenly intuition, with the very diverse rhythms of her other and even greater poems more restricted in form, such as "The Convent Threshold" already named, of

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which Mrs. Meynell has said the supreme and incomparable word of uttermost praise.

No woman who is familiar with Christina Rossetti's poems can read her life, without a conviction that the agony of renunciation, to so intense and passionate a nature, deepened the inspiration of what was highest and most searching in her power.

Among her Christmas verses it is impossible not to love the childlike gladness and exquisite simplicity of such carols as the one beginning "The Shepherds had an Angel," and the still more beautiful one which includes the lines :

"What can I give Him,
Poor as I am?
If I were a shepherd
I would bring a lamb."

Yet it is probably not to these carols that a sorrowful world will turn most often, but rather to the delicate reserve and divine hope of such lyrics as "My love whose heart is tender," the pleading of the Man of Sorrows in "Despised and Rejected," the glorious inspiration of "Advent," the humility and trust of "Sursum Corda," and of that wonderful double "Sonnet of Sonnets," "Later Life," or to such poems as the one which holds the lines :

"Not in this world of hope deferred,
This world of perishable stuff."

If space were less limited, it would be interesting to compare the widely varying genius of women already gone from our midst who have written

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enduring poetry in the bygone century—all lifting their gift high above stain, all strong in their fervour of womanliness, brave with the plain-spoken courage of a holy and untarnished goodness; all, in their life as well as in their song, “true to the kindred points of Heaven and Home.” In their art they differed widely, but the greatest of them have at least one memorable gift in common, inasmuch as they have left us sonnets not easily to be surpassed. With one such sonnet by Christina Rossetti, characteristic in its white fire of love and faith, this short *causerie* must end. It is one of the “Monna Innominata” series :

“If I could trust mine own self with your fate,
Shall not I rather trust it in God’s hand,
Without Whose Will one lily doth not stand,
Nor sparrow fall at his appointed date ;
Who numbereth the innumerable sand,
Who weighs the wind and water with a weight,
To Whom the world is neither small nor great,
Whose knowledge foreknew every plan we
planned.

Searching my heart for all that touches you,
I find there only love and love’s goodwill
Helpless to help and impotent to do,
Of understanding dull, of sight most dim ;
And therefore I commend you back to Him
Whose love your love’s capacity can fill.”

THE IDEAL WOMAN AS WORDSWORTH AND SHELLEY SAW HER

It is not surprising that poets of such opposite temperament and divergent ethics as Wordsworth and Shelley should both alike have drawn for us a vision of womanhood in which each poet is completely in accord with the other. There are truths so fundamental and convincing in their primary importance that, although they may be coloured by the mind that reflects them, as though one showed the rose-coloured and the other the violet or the gold, they appeal to all alike in proportion to the vividness with which they are presented. And in moments of transient agitation or political stress, it is salutary to turn to such primary realities, on a day of party conflict to think the more of Imperial responsibilities, and duties in which wider issues are involved, and in the clamour between suffragists and anti-suffragists to look for an instant at those high aims and ideals which both alike recognise and acclaim—to forget for an hour what women should do and have, in the thought of what women should be. That one prosaic couplet in Wordsworth's beautiful poem to his wife in which he tells us,

“And now I see, with eye serene,
The very pulse of the machine,”

is finely suggestive of that inner power and

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guidance which befit a being described in the two lines which follow as "a traveller between life and death," and is at one with Shelley's more quietistic image of a "well of sealed and secret happiness." In neither is the source of beauty and of joy to remain unshared, though its inmost sanctity lie deep and unrevealed. That "pulse" of radiant being which controls and inspires

"The reason firm, the temperate will,
Endurance, foresight, strength and skill,"

is in Wordsworth's poem the very pivot on which turn all holy and tender activities, all patient and lowly domestic joys—is, indeed, the very mainspring of life in

"A perfect woman, nobly planned,
To warn, to comfort and command."

That "well of sealed and secret happiness" of which Shelley sings in "Episychidion" is no treasure of self-centred brooding; for he tells us in the very next line that it "vanquishes dissonance and gloom," and, lest even that should not be clear enough, he adds that his ideal is not a Star which moves alone in the moving heavens, but is as a smile among frowns, a gentle tone amid rude voices; and then he crowns the whole passage with that consummate line, still descriptive of all that a restless world should find in the sanctuary of a woman's soul:

"A Solitude, a Refuge, a Delight."

That "well" is to be filled with the sunbeams of the eternal—

THE IDEAL WOMAN

“The sunbeams of those wells which ever leap
Under the lightnings of the soul—too deep
For the brief fathom-line of thought or sense.”

Sidney Dobell said that goodness in a woman was not enough—it must be beautiful goodness. This is not the place to discuss that wonderful intermingling in our day of the religious traditions of the East and of the West which reveal beneath the ancient symbols of both the same everlasting mysteries, but there is one part of the teaching which he who runs may read—teaching which is confirmed by the discoveries of the scientist, as well as by the experience of the obedient spirit in man. It is the simple fact that the vital force which shapes the universe and moulds the lives of men has entrusted to Woman the first pre-natal guardianship of the highest form of perceptible life upon this planet. And it may be that, as compensation to the many women to whom this highest grace is not accorded, the privilege of sacrificial service may make of them also, in Shelley's words,

“A lute, which those whom love has taught to
play

Make music on, to soothe the roughest day.”

The world has advanced beyond that barbarous day in which those who preferred the hardships of loneliness to the second best of a marriage imperfectly mated, were ridiculed as the wastrels of womanly ambition, and the great army of women-workers grows yearly happier in the honest comradeship of earnest-minded men. In this world of joy and

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sorrow and continual combat, voluntary and efficient work stands second only to love, as a means of strength and solace, if only it be not work so mechanical or brutalising, or beyond the powers of the worker, as to involve on the one hand the deadening of faculty or on the other the overstrain of nervous power.

Men desire to save women from both these extremes, but under present conditions it is often beyond a possibility.

They desire also with a passion, not the less deep because it is often inarticulate, to find in women a breath of the spiritual repose and intellectual quietude, which can only be attained by those who determinately secure, in the midst of a bustling and overcrowded age, a practice of inward meditation with its enshrining silence, in which the Truth can be heard and character be calmed and strengthened, for that daily ordeal in which it may be said of every noble life, as Wordsworth said of Milton, that its soul "the lowliest duties on itself doth lay."

FOR THE COMMON CAUSE

[*A Dramatic Study*]

Not for ourselves, O God, but those poor things
Who have no time or strength to grow their wings
And needs must crawl in dust the whole day long
To make their fellow-creatures rich and strong—
For women fair as flowers, all choked in filth
That will enrich some other's garden-tilth !

Give us a voice, ten thousand voices, God,
That we may be for them Thy staff and rod,
And never rest in helping Thy brave men
To cleanse the sins of this Augean den,
Till all the Empire, whereof we are part,
Holds no more hells, but is love's Home and
Heart !

Help us to help the children, give us grace
To adorn all workrooms, light each darkened place,
And, by the shrewdness of a woman's wit,
Helping the forces of all manly grit,
Unlock the doors that now are shut so fast
Till law and liberty join hands at last.

On us, on us, is laid the heavy load
Of standing by to see a cruel goad
Plunged deep each day in other women's flesh—
To see Thy wounds bleed every day afresh !
Increase our humbleness, increase our powers,
That we may fill the wilderness with flowers—

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That all the desert where thy millions lie
Half choked with earth and toiling lest they die,
May wake and blossom like one heavenly rose
That shall its sweetness out of earth uncloze,
And all the world's unutterable pain
At last, at last, O God, be not in vain !—
This do we ask, tho' we thereby be slain.

A RECURRENT QUESTION

IF we mistake not, it was Sir John Cockburn, whose views upon one aspect of the fiscal question have recently been much quoted, who, some years ago, opened a discussion in *London Opinion* on a subject hardly less complicated, though at the first glance perhaps less controversial and more obviously suited to these pages : the question whether emigration is desirable for women. Excellent common sense distinguished many of the letters contributed.

“ Youth and health and capacity of endurance they should have as capital to start with,” wrote one of those who entered on the debate. In this she agreed with another and even more forcible correspondent, who, unlike herself, believed that the outlook for middle-aged women in England promised a severe struggle for existence, much more severe competitively than in Canada and the States, but who added that

“ The Englishwoman who thinks of emigrating should have at least £50 as capital ; but, above all, she should satisfy herself that she has the three essential qualities for Canadian and American life. She must have : (1) A sound physique to stand the strain of extremes in climate and the ‘ rush ’ of American business life ; (2) an adaptable temperament which will not fret and fume because things in Kansas or Winnipeg are not as they are in Clapham

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or Nottingham ; and (3) a plucky soul to help her to face any initial adversities."

Mr. Havelock Ellis wrote that in the four years which he spent in "one of the most prosperous of our colonies" he knew

"many women who had come out from the Home Country; some were happy, others not. It may be said of women," he observed, "as of men, that those who succeed here will probably succeed still better in the Colonies; those who fail here will fail still worse there."

He summed up a cogent and illuminating letter with a reminder that

"As regards the Colonies as a cure for moral infirmities, [we must] not forget the saying of the wise Roman that they who run across the sea change their climate, but do not change their souls."

In this he was at one with the correspondent quoted above, who said bluntly and sensibly :

"Girls who contemplate emigrating merely in search of husbands, girls who are afraid of genuine hard work, girls who fancy that life was meant for pleasure only, girls who have merely a smattering of music or a capacity for giggling as their social accomplishments—all these girls ought to stay at home. They are better off in England, not because England needs them or appreciates them, but because young and rapidly developing countries will not harbour deadheads."

A RECURRENT QUESTION

It may be mere platitudinarian commonplace to labour the point that happiness in the highest sense of the word is dependent upon character rather than environment. That is self-evident. But it would also be a very shallow and dangerous touch of cant to ignore the equally self-evident fact that in many environments such happiness will always include a large element of conquered pain.

Mere exercise of faculty, for instance, is often a legitimate delight which in some directions many women have to renounce, and those of us to whom this source of enjoyment lies open would be pharisaical indeed if, being unshackled ourselves, we were to write or speak in such a way as to bind on the shoulders of others burdens too heavy to be borne. We shall do well to remember that even in the twentieth century there are many homes where the strongest capabilities and gifts, possessed by one or more of those who dwell about the hearth, are quietly stifled or surrendered, in the spirit of a noble loyalty and obedience, and sometimes also, it must be confessed, through a weak desire to give to those most loved, not so much what they need or what is good for them, as what they exactingly and unjustifiably claim.

How can the women we have in mind be best helped to freedom and usefulness by release from those cramping grooves and circles, in which there is a wasteful sacrifice of faculty, even though their initial readiness to waste themselves in a moral treadmill has had in it elements of great nobleness and supreme love? There are homes where four or five daughters, all middle-aged women, will

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continue to starve themselves in body and soul rather than grieve some near and dear relation—father or mother, or elder brother, it may be—by breaking the family tradition and saying frankly, “We are poor, we must divide. Our parents shall be tenderly cared for always, but that can in reality be better done if we do not all herd together; there must be division of labour; some of us will stay, some of us will go.”

In some such cases the suggestion of emigration may undoubtedly lessen the difficulty of such a rupture, for there are many parents and guardians who will listen to that particular appeal, but who would be deaf to the idea of an independent professional career for their daughters or their wards in England. And, indeed, it does appear that emigration may in some instances offer a healthier and more natural field for women than much of the over-strenuous tension of our great English towns. Only there is always the question, “Who is the woman and where does she purpose going?” If she is unhandy, vacillating, prejudiced, weak, the most ignorant of us can perceive that she may cross the seas only to deepen her own misery and create new misery for others. If, on the other hand, she is capable, prompt, and—in the deepest and widest sense of the word—womanly, then, if she be equipped also with health and abundant vitality, it is not difficult to imagine for her a wide and delightful kingdom. Yet even for such a woman as this, and granting that she goes forth unpledged and free of soul—without which proviso there may be good material for tragedy—yet even for her

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the outlook is more complicated than might at first be supposed. It may be true that she will command a higher income than in the British Islands, though frequently expenses will be higher also ; but, as regards marriage, the risks may be multiplied rather than lessened, for the mere fact of a superfluity of men in the Colonies is but one factor in the problem, and occasionally a very deceptive one ; it does not by any means follow that the woman who has grown up under quite other surroundings, and suddenly comes into their midst, will find among them her true mate. They have been educated, perhaps, under conditions quite alien to her own life, these men, and the noblest of them—so weak is human nature—may fail to touch her heart, even if they wish to win her—a wish that the mere fact of their majority in point of numbers does not always make a foregone conclusion. The comradeship offered may be healthy, inspiring, delightful ; but, because wives are needed, it by no means follows that the emigrant's own small round of acquaintance—a round limited, in some instances, by the isolation of "up-country" life, or of a small provincial settlement—will include the man who can uplift her—that one individual woman in particular—to the ideal wifehood and motherhood which might seem likely best to complete and ripen all that is finest in her. There are men in our colonies who are strong, chivalrous, upright—the very salt of the earth. But is it not equally true that the wastrel and the hollow-hearted, the tinsel that is not gold, may not seldom have been shipped there as a last resource ? Good and bad, coarse and fine,

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will be found there, as here, among the men as well as among the women, and many, doubtless, all the world over, who are a little of both.

If it were certain that a happy marriage or a successful career would await even nine-tenths of the women likely to emigrate, then, indeed, who is there among us who would not hurry her sisters down to the ships? But it is not so simple, though doubtless the risks may often be amply worth taking. In other words, the question of emigration for women is one which cannot be answered in general terms, but must be carefully weighed and inquired into in each particular instance. And as for the deep, underlying joy and peace which may make any woman's life beautiful, whether in youth or age, these are not dependent on latitude and longitude, or even on social and professional liberty, but on surrender, moment by moment, to the guidance of the Highest.

SNOW-WHITE

AMID the dazzling whiteness now surrounding my cottage, weighing down the branches of the tall pines that make a charming bit of woodland across the roadway, I think of the magic wrought on far-away buildings, transmuting all grimy and squalid outlines to peaceful splendour, and I turn to those wondrous lines of Mr. Robert Bridges which describe a snowfall in London :

“ When men were all asleep the snow came flying,
In large white flakes falling on the city brown,
Stealthily and perpetually settling and loosely
lying,

Hushing the latest traffic of the drowsy
town ;

Deadenng, muffling, stifling its murmurs failing ;

Lazily and incessantly floating down and down :

Silently sifting and veiling road, roof, and railing ;

Hiding difference, making unevenness even,

Into angles and crevices softly drifting and
sailing.

All night it fell, and when full inches seven

It lay in the depth of its uncompacted lightness,

The clouds blew off from a high and frosty
heaven ;

And all woke earlier for the unaccustomed
brightness

Of the winter dawning, the strange unheavenly
glare :

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The eye marvelled—marvelled at the dazzling whiteness ;

The ear hearkened to the stillness of the solemn air.”

The outward universe is, as man knows it, one vast symbolic scroll, of meaning too deep to be uttered ; and if we turn symbols to hackneyed uses, that is the fault of our platitudes and not of the great original. The “stillness of the solemn air,” that almost always accompanies the newly fallen snow, is one attraction of that particular hieroglyph, as though it were the stainless peace of an unutterable purity, and when the sky overhead is of that radiant, unfathomable blueness, which, to our cousins across the Atlantic, is the familiar background to such a foreground as this, and even here in England is now and again vouchsafed, then the great page of the illuminated missal is easy to read. If there be added, in lady’s redingote or the “pink” of a huntsman, that touch of scarlet that the Queen in the old fairy-tale of Snowdrop beheld in the white snow when she pricked her thimble-finger, then indeed the supremacy of contrast is a splendour not easily forgotten. But even without the blue and the scarlet, the celestial whiteness of the untrodden snow has, like the first brave snowdrop, a message for every childlike heart, a message that is only less moving than the sight of a snowy cloud sailing silently across the midsummer sky, or the fragrant star of a Mary-lily in the June sunshine.

Is it not a priceless symbol and possession, a bit

SNOW-WHITE

of knowledge which every man may hug with joy, to have learned that whiteness is not a negation, but the sum of all those delicate and brilliant hues which are the very ecstasy of art, the very language of rapture, that

“Pure light unbroken by the prism”

of which Browning wrote in a lyric of self-effacing passion? Ah, Browning, the great optimist, understood sorrow and bitterness, though he saw through the agony of darkness to the light behind it all. He never ignored ugly facts. It was in a sordid and hideous murder trial that he found and limned for all time that beautiful soul “perfect in whiteness” of whom he makes the old Pope say :

“Yet if in purity and patience, if
In faith held fast despite the plucking fiend,
Safe like the signet stone with the new name
That saints are known by,—if in right returned
For wrong, most pardon for worst injury,
If there be any virtue, any praise,—
Then will this woman-child have proved—who
knows?—
Just the one prize vouchsafed unworthy me.”

It was an awful story in which the child of an outcast played her part, and the poet who drew Pompilia in all the beauty of immortality knew well that this, which is “not our continuing city,” is full of tragedy as well as of redeeming love, and that, as he wrote elsewhere,

LEAVES OF PROSE

“It is by no breath,
Turn of eye, wave of hand, that salvation joins
issue with death!”

It is part of our debt to him that, like many another great poet, he has brought home to us the mystic reality of that unfathomable love, which utters to all the agony of the world, from the heart of God, what we mean when we say to some beloved and sorrowing friend, “My heart bleeds for you,” and our friend bathes in the warm tide of outpoured sympathy and strength.

Between Christmas and the New Year many a North-Country shepherd out in the snow will have thought of Him who thus gave Himself for us, and of whom Henry Vaughan has reminded us that there were many reasons why He should call the shepherds to Him first—

“To see their soul’s great shepheard who was come,
To bring all stragglers home;
Where now they find him out, and, taught before,
That Lamb of God adore,
That Lamb whose days great Kings and Prophets
wish’d
And long’d to see, but miss’d.
The first light they beheld was bright and gay,
And turn’d their night to day;
But to this later light they saw in him,
Their day was dark and dim.

Ah, why fret that there be graves beneath the snow, as well as snowdrops, when Love that “beareth all things” is omnipresent, and all souls

SNOW-WHITE

—not only the souls of the righteous—are “in the hand of God”!

“Eternal Father, who didst all create,
In whom we live, and to whose bosom move,
To all men be Thy name known, which is Love.

By Thee in paths of peace Thy sheep be led,
And in the vale of terror comforted.”

It is fitting that the lines with which this little snow-reverie ends should be from that great living poet with whose description of London snow it began, but to realise their beauty and their meaning to the full, not only should the entire sonnet be read, but also the whole series, entitled “The Growth of Love,” of which it is the culmination.

IN PRAISE OF "ADAM BEDE"

[Reprinted from the "Temple Classics" by the courtesy of the publishers]

GEORGE ELIOT was far too great an artist to stoop to that kind of obvious, yet superficial, portraiture in fiction which lends itself to precise identification: she is known to have disliked extremely that vulgar spirit of trite misapprehension which attributes to creative genius a kind of mental snapshot, scattering photographs of places and people, to which the would-be critics give large-type labels. We know, from what she has herself told us, how far removed from any cheap reduplication of that sort was her presentment of "Adam Bede," and she has warned us that, though there were, in her sketch of him, traits of her own father, and, in his story, two incidents connected with the latter, yet he was by no means to be regarded as a portrait, any more than Dinah is a portrait of that "Aunt Samuel" whose visit to a condemned prisoner, "a very ignorant girl, who had murdered her child," did, as a matter of fact, suggest the germ out of which the story of "Adam Bede" arose. But all this is best told in the author's own words, and will be found on pp. 254 and 255 of the one-volume edition of Mr. Cross's "Life of George Eliot."

To annotate a work of art is always a perilous undertaking, and especially would that be true of so supreme an achievement as "Adam Bede"—at once an idyll and a tragedy, absolute in its simple

IN PRAISE OF ADAM BEDĒ

unity and self-restraint, most moving in its beauty, passionate in its suffering, yet calm and uplifting as a great symphony or a fine sunset. There is nothing to explain, nothing to add ; for hardly anything is more striking to a careful and sympathetic reader than the perfect critical judgment with which everything likely to mar artistic unity and clearness has, by a kind of divine instinct, been avoided, while everything vital to the drama, even to the smallest detail, unfolds with the inevitableness of fate.

It may satisfy a transient curiosity to know that Mr. Irwine's "*Foulis Æschylus*," alluded to on p. 214, was published at Glasgow in 1795, and that there was a handsome edition from the text of Stanley, corrected by Professor Porson, and illustrated with Flaxman's designs. And although it in no way affects our enjoyment of that inimitable description of Mr. Casson, on p. 13, and the sleek healthiness of the small upper sphere in his genial and rotund person, it may possibly please some stray lover of English verse to note that it was in the first book of "*Paradise Lost*" (line 291) that "Milton has irreverently called the moon" "a spotty globe."

In classic verse there are many descriptions of English landscape which would finely companion the noble prose in which, by half a dozen masterly lines, George Eliot has again and again given us the very poetry of Midland scenery. Without attempting any elaborate reference to these, it may be permissible to recall the words of another great Englishwoman of the nineteenth century :

LEAVES OF FROSE

“(As if God’s finger touched but did not press
In making England) such an up and down
Of verdure,—nothing too much up or down,
A ripple of land ; such little hills, the sky
Can stoop to tenderly and the wheatfields climb ;
Such nooks of valleys lined with orchises,
Fed full of noises by invisible streams ;
And open pastures where you scarcely tell
White daisies from white dew,—at intervals
The mythic oaks and elm-trees standing out
Self-poised upon their prodigy of shade,—
I thought my father’s land was worthy too
Of being my Shakspeare’s.”

The oak and the elm here have the pre-eminence ; but the beech-tree—unsurpassed for symmetry of line and translucent beauty of colour—is more frequent in Adam Bede’s country, and, in organic unity of force and grace, might stand as no unfitting symbol of the form and endurance given to his story.

George Eliot has not been afraid to give an exact date to the novel. It was published in 1859, and the story opens in 1799, sixty years earlier. But, just as she has avoided any lessening of charm which would have resulted from mere multiplicity of detail, in those pretty touches of bygone costume which make the final spell of grace, of colour, of vividly picturesque reality, in her descriptions of Hetty, or Arthur, or the Irwines ; so also in the more important features of her background, while the setting of the story is found to be strikingly accurate and appropriate, yet jarring amplification

IN PRAISE OF ADAM BEDĒ

and sentimental embroidering have throughout been skilfully excluded.

1799 was a critical and eventful year, and with admirable art George Eliot makes use of the disturbed condition of Ireland as an occasion for Arthur Donnithorne's absence from England with his regiment when Hetty arrives at Windsor—admirable art, because the point is taken for granted and not even explained, lest the idyllic setting of the tragedy—a setting which can only enhance its inexorable pathos and terror—should be diverted to political controversy or detailed national history.

It is the year in which “the Moving Finger” of a self-made destiny wrote the frightful—nay, outrageous—story of the abuse of the Indemnity Acts, upon a page of Irish history blotted by torture and corruption, and in which the Irish Parliament signed its own death-warrant in its proceedings against suspected rebels; a year in which the bigotry against Irish Roman Catholics seems to have equalled in spirit the worst stories of the Spanish Inquisition, since there are many men and women to whom torture and brutal flogging would be a worse kind of suffering than death at the stake. Any one interested in the subject may find it worth while to turn to the fourth volume of Massey's “History of England.” The stirring history, that was a-making in the wider European story of Buonaparte's increasing power and Nelson's victories, is indicated, with the same incidental brevity, in the remarks of the villagers. Any writer less inspired might have been inclined to labour the point, but never once in “Adam Bede” did

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George Eliot swerve from the austere self-discipline and economy of the highest achievement.

Again, it is impossible not to admire the critical instinct which forbade any dissertation on the history of Dinah's co-religionists. There is no mention of them, beyond what was necessarily and dramatically included in the story. Perhaps the keenest temptation to impertinent digression likely to assail the writer of this note is the inclination to touch on Dinah's divinely simple re-statement of eternal truths. It can scarcely be doubted that, precisely through the absence of all polemical intention, all weak sentimentalism, all inclination to "improve the occasion," the story of "Adam Bede" must have entered deeply into that widening and regenerating of religious thought so characteristic of the nineteenth century, and that the music of thousands of toiling lives may owe much to that thrilling chord, struck by the hand of her who gave to our heart and imagination so fair an ideal in this gentle servant of the poor, of whom Adam said that she had "a face like a lily," and whom his mother likened to the angel in his Bible that had rolled away the stone from the tomb. Herself following in the steps of Charles Wesley, Dinah Morris holds the memory with the same warm, white radiance as that other unlettered girl whose presence has transfigured the dark atmosphere of the "Ring and the Book" with a halo of purity and grace.

There is an incense of the Morn to which some are more alive than others. George Eliot was very sensitive to odours, and has used their influence in

IN PRAISE OF ADAM BEDE

"Adam Bede" with as penetrating a magic as Milton has done in "Paradise Lost." Twice is Dinah associated with the fragrance of sweet-brier : what could better haunt the recollection of such a presence than this exquisite dewy sweetness, unsullied as the clear, fresh air of a world beyond our mortal dust, yet equally suggestive of the village altar and the village hearth?

Certain it must be that this tragic idyll, of which Dinah is the life and soul, will not only last as long as the English language lasts, but will purify, uplift, and strengthen, every heart and mind into which it enters, and the more lastingly because the author has never once obtruded her own personality; she has simply held up the mirror to life, and this no great artist can do without reflecting something of the ineffable Presence. The sacredness of work, the sense of the God-given inspiration which should inform and transfigure handicraft, the subtle relation between thoroughness in duty and solidity of character, the divine value of lowly tasks;—seldom indeed have these struck more warmly and convincingly on the listening mind than in this enthralling story of human love and passion. But this sterling philosophy of life, this unflinching ideal of ardent obedience and uncalculating self-surrender to the command that lies nearest, could hardly have made so poignant and salutary a mark upon the memory, had they left their legitimate everyday drama and descended to self-conscious teaching, or had they missed their converse in that self-delighting, easy benevolence which, in the slowly grinding mill of Life, learned its own desolating

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possibilities, and spoke its own bitter loss of youth and joy, in Arthur's last recorded words.

Looking at "Silas Marner" and "Scenes of Clerical Life," to say nothing of "The Mill on the Floss" and the later novels, it is a bold thing to say that "Adam Bede" is George Eliot's masterpiece, yet the more it is studied, the more likely is that belief to be confirmed. The story hardly seems to be *told*—it *lives*. So inspired is its intuitive perfection that even the few out-of-the-way words of Midland dialect seem to make no passing obscurity, their meaning being intervoven with the context in such a way as to be implicitly obvious. And with what mastery of genius has the novelist given us the simple poetry of peasant imagery and peasant speech! There is a beautiful passage in Clough's "Bothie of Tober-na-Vuolich," in which Elspie says to her lover :

"I have been building myself up, up, and toilfully
 raising,
Just like as if the bridge were to do it itself
 without masons,
Painfully getting myself upraised one stone on
 another,
All one side I mean ; and now I see on the other
Just such another fabric uprising, better and
 stronger,

Sometimes I dream of a great invisible hand
 coming down, and
Dropping the great keystone in the middle : there
 in my dreaming,

IN PRAISE OF ADAM BEDE

Feel the other part—all the other stones of the
archway,
Joined into mine with a strange happy sense of
completeness. . . .”

In a single phrase, pathetic in its bare simplicity, Lisbeth Bede, Adam's mother, the narrow, querulous old woman, “clean as a snowdrop,” and one of the most vivid of the minor creations in literature, gives that image its complement of grief. “When one end o' th' bridge tumbles down,” she says, “where's th' use o' th' other stannin'?” Mrs. Poyser's renown has overshadowed that of Lisbeth, but the latter is quite as epigrammatic as the other notable housewife; and what a true touch it is to make these two most “practical” women the most daringly poetic in their turns of speech! It is Mrs. Poyser who says of Dinah that she is “one o' them things as looks the brightest on a rainy day, and loves you the best when you're most in need on't,” and Lisbeth who describes herself after her husband's death as being “no better nor an old haft when the blade is gone.”

Language, as George Eliot herself uses it in “Adam Bede,” has become so finished and flexible a medium of thought that it may be said to have attained to that highest perfection which effaces itself, so that the reader forgets that there is any medium at all, in his active and immediate realisation of that which it conveys.

As for the humour that breathes through the whole novel, Shakespeare himself has not surpassed it in unaffected actuality. The drama unfolds

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itself in all its terrible beauty and pathos with the awful inevitableness and naturalness of life itself.

“The Moving Finger writes ; and, having writ,
Moves on : nor all thy Piety nor Wit
Shall lure it back to cancel half a Line,
Nor all thy Tears wash out a Word of it.”

But for the sense of encircling and redeeming Love, which comes home to the reader, not only through the words and deeds of Dinah, but in every passing heart-throb, every obscure footstep, throughout the whole story, the burden of fate would become too overwhelming a load, so insistent throughout is the passionate verification of Adam's words,—“Life's a reckoning we can't make twice over,” and those earlier words of his, already referred to, as having been quoted by Arthur at the close of all,—“There's a sort of wrong that can never be made up for.”

ST. PAUL'S CHIMES

IN London's heart, the home of toil and love,
Where, round the cross, the silver-breasted dove
Is circling to the music of your chime—
Or brooding in the golden mist above
The docks and shipping and unresting river,
A little height beyond the smoke and grime
That veil the haunts of love and grief and crime—
Still, day and night, your message you deliver,
To point the record of unpausing time :
Reflecting on your dial,
For watchful man's espial,
Earth's tale of hourly movement on through space ;
On, round her axis turning,
About a splendour burning,
With punctual inexorable pace :
While, daily, like some bird on slanting wing,
She holds incessantly the wondrous poise
That will secure recurrent vernal joys ;
The perfume, colour, music of the Spring !—
Still drawn to him she never will embrace,
Who warms her winter into summer grace,
As if reluctant, yet persistent, goes—
Repelled and drawn—enriched with human freight,
Made glad with winged and footed fellowship
Of beast and bird, and finny-ocean deep,
And fair wild things, from holly-berry to rose—
Nor out of her ellipse with random slip
Has ever fallen, nor flown with random leap
To swift destruction and abysmal fate !

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Still dost thou mark unerring, how she moves
In that vast cosmic order where she proves
One influence, small and incommensurate,
In that wide universe whereof man knows
No certain boundary, where the mystery glows
Magnetic with unseen, unknown vibrations
Of ancient stars and ever-new creations,
The sanctities of endless constellations,
Which human thought can never violate.

For what are days and hours and months and years,
While seasons come and go
And lives move to and fro,
But rhythmic interwheeling of the spheres
Whose balanced flight in everlasting chase,
Which man recalls upon your homely face,
Are no true measure of his hopes and fears,
His joys divine, his agonies and tears ;
Though you, two-handed, made to measure time,
Through day and night the mystic numbers chime !
Yet man, while onward faring
Through many an age and clime—
From light to darkness, back through dark to light,
With dawn forever following after night—
Will note your solemn chime,
And set his clocks to rhyme
With our small earthly wheel
In that most wondrous, universal Clock,
Whereon the Source of Law has set His seal—
Through darkness, light preparing,
For life, through death, still caring,—
That timepiece none may alter or unlock
Save One Who made it.

ST. PAUL'S CHIMES

Men may gaze and mock—

Its pendulum will rock
Through all æonian change and temporal shock,
'Mid cycling evolution,
Or sequent devolution
And starry revolution,
On to the end of time !

And when the Master shall the heavens roll
At last together, like a finished scroll,
To give us welcome at the "Marriage-feast"
Which will the dual riddle perchance resolve
That man has ever vainly yearned to solve—
Beyond the caravanseraï of earth,
With all its dream of human death and birth,
Love having slain the dragon and the beast !—
Then, if we see no more the Clock august
That shall have vanished with the starry dust
And all the bodies breathing mortal breath,
We shall not much remember it, nor care,
When hope's fruition faltering memory shrives !

Oh, then at last, when all division's over
And joy has come to every faithful lover,
While those "twice-born," beyond the reach of
death,

Gaze on the Face they longed for all their lives,
All earthly love—immortal, bright or dim—
Fulfilled and found again in finding Him ;
Unless their heaven be hell because they read,
In one long answering look that will not spare,
Of strength they wasted whereof love had need,—
They will be thankful Life of time is bare !

TWO STUDIES

BY MAY SINCLAIR

A SERVANT OF THE EARTH

BY MAY SINCLAIR

HIS name was Elisha Bole, and he lived in the little village of Harford, in South Devon. He was a farm-labourer, fallen in his old age on evil days and the parish. With him these things had come ten years before their time, for Bole was a young man—that is to say, not much more than sixty—at the time of the great trouble. Bole was out hedging with the best of them, when he slipped from a high bank, and the stake he had just planted went through his ribs, doing incurable hurt to his lungs.

That was how Bole came to embrace the contemplative life. Not willingly. It may seem hard to believe it of a Devonshire man, but Bole, with only breath enough to take him to the end of his garden and back, panted for the life of action. Yesterday he had range of the soil for at least seven miles round his village. To-day a garden and a cottage were all his world.

A pleasant place enough, that garden, when it was not scourged by rain from heaven, or hidden under mist from the river, or blotted out by fog from the sea. There the year rang its changes in a happy sequence of scents, violets, roses, chrysanthemums, and the rich earthy smell dear to a son of the soil. There the slow movement of the seasons stirred his intelligence to processes more slow.

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A porch of trellis-work, flanked by tall bushes of chrysanthemums, led straight from the open air into the dwelling-place, an inner world where all was vague, indistinguishable. At first you saw nothing there but layers upon layers of darkness and the figure of Bole moving on the face of the darkness like a shadow. Then gradually, because of a certain light and movement in them, his eyes and his smile detached themselves from the surrounding gloom. Presently, after stumbling against it, perhaps, you made out a table heaped with dark objects (I never knew what these were till long afterwards), or, guided by its furious ticking, an eight-day clock in the far corner, and in the twilight of the window pots of geraniums half buried under primeval dirt. At least, you may call it dirt—I would rather think of it as a gentle fusion of Bole and his geraniums with the earth from which they came.

After all, when you got used to it, there was something restful in these obscurities which made Bole so profoundly one with his world. It was a shock when I found one warm Sunday that Bole had developed a sudden individuality by washing his face. It seemed to disturb that serene, abiding sense of unity. How often have I found him crouching over his low fire, or seated at his table, motionless, staring into the darkness. Then he seemed to me not so much Bole the labourer as Bole the dreamer, the philosopher, the mystic. Who knows whether in that lapse of all sensation, all idea, Bole may not have touched the supreme Nothingness? I used to ask myself whether I did

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A SERVANT OF THE EARTH

well to rouse him from those beatitudes of vacuity to the painful life of thought, whether our friendship might not have interfered with some merging of Bole in the Infinite.

For it came on him suddenly, when he was unready for anything of the kind. Bole had not learned the uses of friendship, and strange faces annoyed him. His life had been split in two: there was the time before and the time after his accident, and one knew nothing of the other. And if Bole was morose as well as unsociable, circumstances had helped to make him so. He lived alone, having neither friends nor kindred in the village, save Radley, his brother-in-law, and Radley he hated. Radley, once a policeman, was a sordid man who lived on a pension in obtrusive affluence. Fortune, who had smiled on Radley, had treated Bole with feminine malignity. Many years before the accident some of the villagers had formed themselves into a club for support in times of sickness. This club was looked on by the greater part with extreme disfavour, and only a few of the more revolutionary spirits belonged to it, Bole, among their number, risking all his little savings. The club might have flourished to this day, but for the inconsiderate behaviour of one of its members, whose ill-timed sickness and death broke the bank. Of him Bole always spoke as of one who had indeed greatly erred, but had not therefore forfeited all claim to pity and forgiveness. But Radley—well, Bole was the creature of prejudice.

Bole being as he was, his friendship was not

LEAVES OF PROSE

to be won without infinite sleight and cunning. Many a time my hand was on the latch of his garden gate before I could bring myself to open it. I had thought out a plan, bold, but somewhat crude. Attracted by his fame as a gardener, I was to come to him and humbly beg for advice as to the best way of preserving crocuses from field-mice. A custard pudding was then to be offered him as an informal acknowledgment of his services. But at our first meeting—if it could be called a meeting when Bole's back was immovably presented to me on his threshold—my courage forsook me, and I fled, bearing the pudding.

Our second meeting was happier. This time I had come to buy of his parsley. It was cut and handed to me in silence, and I tendered a shilling in exchange. He looked at it darkly.

"That bain't tüpence," said he.

"N-no. It's no matter."

He held out the coin shining in the palm of his grimy hand.

"Tüpence, I zaid. There's no chaänge i' my plaäce."

And I had no pennies, so I had to take a shilling's worth of parsley; his flowers he would not sell.

On my third visit I turned again to my original plan. I laid my difficulty before him. For full five minutes Bole looked at his hands as if to bring back a sense of the earth they had worked in; he seemed to plunge and lose himself in depths of thought, of memory. He rose darkling to the surface.

A SERVANT OF THE EARTH

“Crocusses, crocusses—yü diggies a ring mebbe one voot round, mebbe tü. Yü vills 'em wi' zinder. Yü zets the crocuss i' the midst. They zay the mouse wunnut win droo the zinder.”

He smiled, and by that smile I came to know him. I took heart from it, and asked if I might come again. He answered me with an air of extreme abstraction: “Zo dü, zo dü, ef yü plaze, mizz.”

I went again. We had not much to say, so many subjects were delicate.

In time I learned to know his ways, and steered clear of the more prominent rocks of offence; but to this day I blush with shame to think of the mistake I made almost at the very outset, thereby undoing the work of many weeks. I offered to read aloud to him. It is very terrible to look back upon, but I was young, and so many of his neighbours liked being read to that I thought he would be sure to share this taste. Not a bit of it. The very suggestion was an insult to his sense of scholarship. From that moment I often came upon him with a book in his hand (generally the Bible or the Book of Common Prayer), when he would detain me, filling up the pauses in the conversation by reading to himself in a slow, soft whisper, laying firm hold on each word with his thumb-nail. A lengthy process; but why should he care for time who was so sure of a blessed eternity?

His tongue once loosened, Bole gradually unbent. We talked—topics ranging from the weather and the crops to the more intimate dealings of Providence with his creatures. No gossip.

LEAVES OF PROSE

Bole did not care enough for his neighbours to talk about them; the little world of the village had ceased to exist for him. But there were still difficulties, limitations. For instance, on the subject of Bole's health there was a certain etiquette against which you gravely sinned by telling him that he "looked better." The right thing was to begin thus:

"You seem to be wheezing a great deal to-day; I'm sure your chest must be worse."

"I be tur'ble bad wi' the whazing, as yü zee. Doctor never comes nigh me." He chuckled maliciously. "Like as not my complaint's a bit tü masterful fur'e." No discomfort could subdue his pride in a disorder that had outwitted the faculty. And Bole knew how to return a compliment. This visit was my first after being kept indoors with some illness; suddenly remembering this, he exclaimed with well-feigned horror: "My! Zit yü down on thiccy cheer. Yü be green i' the faäce!" (This was a polite fiction.)

I waived the delicate flattery. "I'm all right now."

"Don't yü tell me. Better or wuss, yü be tur'ble bad still, I can zee, sure 'nuff."

Once launched on personalities, Bole grew rapidly intimate. He went back to the days before the accident; his voice softened, and he told of his dead wife—dead seventeen years. "'Tis strange. Somehows I zeems t' remember her now better'n ever I dü. 'Er wur a good 'ooman. 'Er couldn't bide long wi' that Radley—Arr-r-r!"

A SERVANT OF THE EARTH

His brother-in-law naturally suggesting his brother, whom he had not seen since they were boys together, Bole wandered further afield. "'Er be gone tü Canada this zixty year—'tis a laäge plaäce they zay. 'Er be varmer there, gotten's own varm and's own land.'" A visionary look stole over his face as he spoke of that brother who had realised the labourer's eternal dream. "'Is zon writes and tells me's vather's growed se vat, er 'ad t' 'ave a special cheer—carpenter-maäde—vur en tü zit down in."

This was said with pride, as a convincing proof that his brother was a man of substance. That I too had a brother in Canada was thought by Bole to be something more than a startling coincidence.

After that day I was free to come and go as I pleased, till, if I let a fortnight pass without seeing him, he would receive me with mild reproach and always the same saying :

"I wur veared as yü wur tük bad again."

As if nothing but illness or death could have excused such neglect !

But if this delightful footing had only been won by cunning, it needed still greater art to make Bole accept the smallest offering. Bole did not want charity ; he wanted to get to work "i' the vields—the vields again !" Moreover, he deemed that it is more blessed to give than to receive. He never let me go now without a bunch of flowers or cuttings from his best geraniums. He would approach mysteriously a certain gloomy drawer, and, opening it in a large and leisurely manner, show me stowed away in a corner an apple which

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he had saved for me on account of its preternatural size. Never shall I forget the smile of underhand delight with which, in the first winter of our acquaintance, he announced, "I've got a Chrizmizz box for yü," displaying a huge cauliflower carefully wrapped in the most abandoned of red pocket-handkerchiefs. And when it was put to him that as he delighted in giving, so it might be that what he called "charity" was also a form of self-indulgence on my part, he accepted the gloss. He confessed that barley-water and lemon-juice was an excellent thing for "the whazing." On this new drink Bole experimented in all the spirit of a natural philosopher. He would hide it for days in dark places; anon he would set it in the sun till it fermented and exploded in his face, to his perpetual surprise and delight, when he would maintain against all argument that the effervescent state was the only right and proper one for barley-water.

Happily Bole seemed aware that a man who has once accepted barley-water cannot consistently refuse any other trifle you may wish to offer him. And now his strength revived, but only for a season. Worse than parish fare were the darkness and the dirt of Bole's dwelling. Even stocks and oak-leaved geraniums were powerless against the ungovernable smells that rose from the ground where the damp oozed through the imperfect concrete. In stormy weather I have seen the rain beat in from the threshold and form a small pool in the middle of the floor. And when a cholera scare came upon us I felt that steps must be taken.

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Therefore I sought out a woman with strong arms, and stronger nerves, fit for the Herculean labour, and broke it very gently to Bole that, with his leave, it would please me to have his cottage thoroughly cleaned and whitewashed.

He refused politely but firmly: "Let en bide, let en bide." Still more gently I touched on the kinship of disease and darkness (you couldn't say "dirt" for fear of hurting his feelings). Still more politely he rebuked my impiety. "I've no vaith i' zoap an' water. I puts *my* trust Elsewhere."

All the same he looked furtively at my gown as I got up to go. It had been fresh when I started; now, sure enough, there were dark streaks on its freshness. To my sorrow he whipped out the red pocket-handkerchief, sought to remove them, and shrank back appalled by his own deed.

"My! I've maade en worser'n 'twas. 'Tis the dirt. But there—yü know what 'tis!"

Not many days afterwards I found him sunning himself at his door and smiling softly. He laid a detaining hand on the latch, saying, with a look of indescribable slyness: "I've got a surprise vur yü." He then threw open the door.

It was a surprise, not to say a shock. The room had been whitewashed from floor to ceiling, and everything in it thoroughly scoured and cleaned. The tin canisters on the chimney-piece gleamed like silver. A brass warming-pan flashed from the wall. On the table by the door shone a white and gold tea set. This was the collection of dark objects which had excited my curiosity in the

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beginning. Bole broke into a low but triumphant chuckle. In a fit of remorse he had planned this scene for my delight, even employing a friend of Radley's for the job.

I remember I was pleased with the transformation. But I have wondered since whether, Bole being so one with that familiar darkness, its removal may not have helped to loosen his hold on life. A day or two later I found him for the first time busy and in high favour with himself.

"Yü'll be surprised to see what I be a-doing of. I be tailoring—I be!"

I was invited to sit down and watch him. He was patching his old fustian coat on an entirely new plan. His way was beset with difficulty. First there was the thread. Bole held it like a lance in rest, and, pursing his mouth with determination, tilted blindly at the needle's eye. Then there was the stuff. Bole was cutting out pieces the exact size of the hole, fitting each into the other, and sewing the raw edges together. When I tried to explain the superior advantages of legitimate patching he shook his head with grave disapproval, and went on in his own fashion, looking up nervously from time to time as the stitches perpetually gave way and the patch fell out. In silence I handed him a large patch, cut out when he was not looking. There was a moment of suspense. At last in silence he took it, and applied it according to instructions, which he pretended not to hear, putting his head very much on one side, like one liberally indulgent to a doubtful innovation. He completed his task with wonderful

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success, but the triumph left him trembling and exhausted.

And now, though it was yet six weeks from Christmas, the weather was unusually bitter, and I brought him a warm Cardigan jacket. It was a thought too tight; and though he insisted on trying it on, he was much shaken by the effort. Politely he denied the misfit. "Er'll dü vinely, er'll dü vinely, mizz"; but there was disappointment somewhere. On being implored to unburden his mind, he confessed that the desire of his heart was for a new white coat. "Zlops, some calls 'em—zame as yü zee me a-tailoring at."

I was ashamed at not having anticipated this obvious want, and a white coat was procured with all possible speed. But when I saw him next he still wore the tailored garment, and I asked anxiously if his new one was a misfit too. He shook his head. No, he was "zaving 'er till th' owld en wur dirty 'nuff to be laäid tü-zide." Only one who had seen "th' owld en" could appreciate the ideal nature of his ambition.

Strangely enough it was on this day that Bole showed the first sign of any interest in his neighbours. One half of Harford is virtuous, the other half is not. I had told him I had just come from the house of one Martha Pile, where a young girl was dying of a terrible form of consumption. He shook his head gravely. "Martha Piles's is no plaäce fur yü, mizz. They zaay 'tis a bad house."

"I don't know what they say—Lizzie's dying."

"Dying? Dying?" He crouched closer to the fire. "Well, Martha's a bad en, but I never knew

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no harm to the pore maaid. Dying, be 'er?" He shivered.

It was but a week later when a message came up from the village that my friend was very ill. I hurried down to the cottage. The drooping chrysanthemums, bitter-sweet on the keen November air, the hoarse ticking of the eight-day clock, had a hint of dissolution in them, and my heart was heavy as I passed through the dwelling-place, so strangely bright and clean, to the low room above.

He did not know me. Radley was with him; he did not know Radley. Radley was grieved at his painful discourtesy in not recognising me through the mist of death: he explained many times over that he was "a bit light i' th' 'ead, like." And all the time Bole moved his head from side to side, and babbled of I know not what; but it seemed that even now, on the borderland of death, he was lost in some shadowy struggle for the means of life. Earth-bound? Who knows?

A little while and he had done with earth; the servant was freed from his master. As I left the room I saw the new white coat lying neatly folded on a chair. It had never been worn.

GEORGE MEREDITH

BY MAY SINCLAIR

GEORGE MEREDITH was born before his time, and he has died before it, as a young man dies. For fifty-five years he laboured, bringing forth the long and splendid procession of his masterpieces, from "The Ordeal of Richard Feverel," a novel of absolute and incomparable greatness, to "The Amazing Marriage," which would alone have proved greatness in a lesser man. And he has not yet come into his own. He is king to the kings and the great lords of literature, but he can in no way be said to reign by the voice of the sovran people. After a long period of obscurity he has passed into the eternal possession of the few. But although by a dreadful fate he became for a time the prey of the cultured, who are fairly numerous, the great, heavy mass of people who read, or think they read, cannot stand Meredith.

And to-day, among the cultured and the critical who do read him, there is a reaction against him. Nobody doubts his greatness nor the divinity of it. Nobody dares suggest that he did not produce great literature. The tendency is to complain that it was literature that he insisted on reproducing, and not life. Some of us deny that he was either a great novelist or a great poet.

The younger generation of novelists are all for a conscientious realism, and we have a few young critics who are conscientious too. And Meredith

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is peculiarly baffling to these. He eludes all their attempts to catch and label him. He seems to them now a realist of considerable piety, and now a romanticist of the kind they most abhor. Already before his death they were trying to place him. They are painfully anxious, elaborately careful, not to place him wrong. And he refuses to be placed.

He did away with their preposterous labels once for all twenty-three years ago, when, in the first chapter of "*Diana of the Crossways*," he proclaimed himself a prophet of "the Real," and at the same time told us that our Realists were our "castigators for not having yet embraced Philosophy."

He defined fiction as "the summary of actual Life, the within and the without of us." It was as a novelist that he came forward for judgment, and it is as a novelist that they arraign him to-day, allowing him to be a philosopher, and, perhaps, as it were by the skin of his teeth, a poet.

Now, to measure his greatness, not as a philosopher, nor yet as a poet, but as a novelist, we must remember the position of the novelist in the Victorian age. He found himself between the devil of realism and the deep sea of sentiment, a horrible position. It distorted his whole attitude to life and his view of the Real. Meredith was the first to deliver the English novel from that degradation. He was the first to see that it is sentiment and not conscience that makes novelists cowards. He recognised Sentimentalism for what it is, the "fine flower of sensualism," and through

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its very fineness the subtlest source of spiritual corruption. He knew that Sentiment—early Victorian Sentiment—piled to its height topples over into the mire. He saw it as the mother of all shams and all hypocrisies, the nurse of monstrous illusions. Thackeray, the greatest novelist of his time, who stood nearest to Meredith in sincerity and fearlessness and hatred of shams, Thackeray was afraid, and put it on record that he was afraid, to tell the truth about a man. He said it in his preface to “Pendennis,” and he laid his cowardice to the account of the Society which had brought fiction to this pass.

Meredith knew nothing of that fear. “Imagine,” he said, “the celestial refreshment of having a pure decency in the place of sham; real flesh; a soul born active, wind-beaten, but ascending. Honourable will fiction then appear; honourable, a fount of life, an aid to life, quick with our blood. Why, when you behold it you love it—and you will not encourage it—or only when presented by dead hands!”

His message to his generation was: “Follow the Real. Do not be led by the tainted sentimental lure. Trust yourselves to Nature, though she make havoc of your sentiment.” For at the heart of Nature he discerned the fiery spiritual pulse, through and beyond Nature the purifying, liberating flame. Thus he escapes his captors who would hold him to pure paganism.

The unity of Nature and Spirit and the return to Spirit through Nature is Meredith’s philosophy. He found his generation sickly, and for the cure

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of its sickliness he prescribed Philosophy. By Philosophy he did not mean anything abstract, anything the least metaphysical, anything really incomprehensible to our arbiter of letters, the man in the street. Meredith's philosophy is brain-stuff, thought that makes up half of the fabric of the world. "Idea," he said, "is vital." He was an idealist only to that extent. Brains, to be any good, must have blood in them, and that is where the heart comes in. No man, no writer, had a greater and a fierier heart at the service of his brain. And so again he escapes the grasp of those who would place him among the unhumanised, inaccessible exponents of the cold Idea, who say that his appeal was not to the universal human heart, but to the by no means universal human intellect.

Now our conscientious young critics have no quarrel with Meredith's philosophy as a philosophy. Their contention is that, as a novelist, he had no right to have any philosophy at all. They resent it as an unwarrantable interference with his drama, an irritating interruption to his story. They attack it on artistic grounds, and because of it they persuade themselves that Meredith was not a great novelist. Which only proves that they have forgotten their Meredith. Nobody who reads his novels with any care will find his philosophy intruding where it can do harm. You will not come across it at any of the intenser psychological moments, in any of the great dramatic scenes, or in any of his inspired passages. It is at its height in "Diana" and "The Egoist," but even there it is confined to the prologue and the interludes.

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Except by way of comment it is almost entirely absent from "Richard Feverel," "Rhoda Fleming," "Evan Harrington," "Harry Richmond," and "Beauchamp's Career."

For Meredith was before all things a great dramatist and a great psychologist, if he was not always a straightforward teller of his tale. And to be those two things is, I take it, to be a great novelist, even if a man happens to have at the same time an irritating philosophy.

Other and more serious charges have been brought against him by our cautious and yet irritable young men. We are all tired of hearing that Meredith is obscure, that he sins by excess, by a vice of temperament, by all sorts of exuberance and eccentricity. It tires us and it annoys us too, for we feel that there is a certain truth in it. But we are also told that he is not a great novelist, not a novelist at all, for the simple reason that he is a poet. And that is interesting. To be a poet, it would seem, is even more disastrous than to be a philosopher. For, after all, Meredith's philosophy embraced the real. But his poetry, they tell us, spoils all that. Because, you see, his lyrical passages express his own emotions, and not the emotions of his characters, and *this* is why he fails to produce the "illusion of reality."

It sounds plausible; it looks as if there might be a certain amount of truth in it. But that is only at first sight. Meredith's lyric passages are there precisely because they do express, as nothing else could, the emotion of his characters. For emotion, at its climax, is powerless to express

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itself or anything. Lucy in love, Richard in love, are dumb, but all heaven is sounding through them, and it is that sound of all heaven which Meredith's prose gives us. True, his method destroys the spectacular illusion for a moment, but it does so that it may preserve the illusion of emotion, of passion, of reality at its highest intensity. Compare him with Dickens in this matter of emotion. Dickens, working himself up into blank verse over the death of Little Nell, is Dickens feeling something about Little Nell and trying to express his feeling. But Meredith in his "Diversion Played on a Penny Whistle" is rendering the song of the souls of Richard and Lucy. They, poor dears, can only say :

" ' Lucy, my beloved ! ' "

" ' Oh, Richard ! ' "

It is all part of his art, his very perfect art.

And it is the same with the "Comic Spirit." The Comic Spirit is not Meredith. It is the Spirit immanent in the world and akin to Mr. Hardy's immortal Ironies. It is part-creative. Even in "The Egoist," where it is rampant, its play is not the play of the author intoxicated by his own wit, making merry over the behaviour of Sir Willoughby Patterne. It is not doing anything over or about or around Sir Willoughby. It is really in him, though he knows it not. The Comic Spirit is an aspect of the cosmic reality in which Sir Willoughby has his being. For the essence of Sir Willoughby is to be absurd, and the Comic Spirit, exposing his absurdity, is the revealer of the eternal verity in him.

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Meredith never destroys the "illusion of reality." It is the illusion of actuality that he tampers with. It may be conceded at once that he had not a very keen sense of the actual, or of local atmosphere and surroundings. His characters appear to be surrounded only by the cosmic spaces. He does not present them circumscribed by any parochial or urban or suburban boundary. He seldom, if ever, paints an interior. His scenic effects we remember best are always of the open air. At the same time he has a profound sense of the bonds, restrictions, distinctions of society and race and class. For these things work in the flesh and blood of a man, they are part of the drama of his soul. That is what Meredith shows us in "Rhoda Fleming," in "Beauchamp's Career," in "Harry Richmond," and in "Evan Harrington," all masterly reproductions of English social and provincial life in the Victorian age.

But they tell us that it is not Meredith's method only that is all wrong. Art, they say, is concerned only with the average, the normal (let it pass), and Meredith wrote of extraordinary people in an extraordinary way. This, we are to believe, applies especially to his women. They are all goddesses, or, if not goddesses, all women six feet high. In this, they tell us, his art is inferior to that of Mr. Hardy. If he desired immortality, he should have written about simple people in a simple way. He should have chosen for his tragedies the elemental passions and treated them elementally. He should have written, in short, like Mr. Hardy.

On the other hand, we also hear that, setting

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out as he does to be subtle, he is not half subtle enough. He should, to produce the perfect illusion of reality, have written more like Mr. Henry James. As it is, he is a victim to the fallacy of the master passion, the dominant note in character, and thus he gives us bare types instead of the rich, intricate web of inconsistencies, the splendid irrelevances and surprises which make up individuality in real life. Sir Willoughby Patterne, for instance, is an egoist, always an egoist, and nothing but an egoist; and no man ever was nothing but one thing.

This is a strange criticism of a man who knew more than any other how to reproduce the very accent and gesture of the soul. What justice there is in it applies only to "The Egoist." There Meredith comes perilously near to the artificial comedy of Molière, where the Misanthrope is always a Misanthrope, and Tartuffe forever Tartuffe. In real life—that is to say, in the eyes of the Omniscient or of Mr. Henry James—Sir Willoughby Patterne would not, perhaps, appear so manifestly and invariably the Egoist he is. It is equally true that in real life if a man is an egoist he will behave and he will feel remarkably like Sir Willoughby Patterne.

And our critics have forgotten Clara Middleton, Cecilia, and all the irrelevances and inconsistencies of the divine Diana. Mr. Henry James would be the first to take off his hat to them.

As for the everlasting comparison with Mr. Hardy, it is futile as any comparison must be between two masters equally supreme in their

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separate territories. But it raises interesting questions: Are their territories, after all, so separate? Is it true that Meredith did not understand elemental men and women? It is certainly true that he wrote mostly about people in whom either breeding or education or the possession of a restless intellect obscures the working of the large tragic passions. The modern world is full of such, full, above all, of such women. And Meredith claimed to have discovered the modern woman, "animated . . . with the fires of positive brain-stuff." He was the first to see that the sentimentalism (again!) of his time was degradation to its women.

Even Thackeray, with his exceeding tenderness and chivalry, Thackeray, who owned himself afraid to tell the truth about a man, did not know, as Meredith knew, the truth about a woman. Or perhaps he knew it and was still more afraid. Meredith knew the truth and the whole truth and dared to tell it, dared to give the leading *rôle* to those large-brained, large-hearted women of his—Diana and Clara and Ottilia and Cecilia Halkett and Rose Jocelyn, Aminta and Carinthia Jane. Charlotte Brontë's Shirley and the great women of George Eliot—Maggie Tulliver, Dorothea Brooke, and Dinah Morris—are small beside them. They are modern women, and we cannot complain of their stature as abnormal, for modern women are often six feet high.

These are his extraordinary women. But when he chose he could draw very ordinary women, and men too, and draw them as the masters draw.

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Look at Ripton Thompson, Algernon Blancove, Mrs. Lovell, "Emmy" and Sir Lukin, Jenny Denham; even Nevil Beauchamp is not extraordinary in our critics' sense; and the list could be extended indefinitely.

As for the elemental and the simple people, Tess is not more elemental in her tragedy than Claire Doria Forey or Dahlia Fleming, or even poor Juliana in "Evan Harrington." And Thomasin Yeobright is not more divinely simple than Lucy Feverel, nor is Rhoda Fleming less captivating in her moral beauty than Marty South. For the rest, Hardy's women and Meredith's women are "sisters under their skin."

Still, it is inevitable to place Hardy and Meredith side by side, for they are the last of the great Victorian novelists, and in many ways they are akin. Both are philosophers, both poets, and in both philosophy is, like their poetry, the result of temperament. Mr. Hardy's genius is bound to make for the simpler and the larger tragedy, seeing that he regards the lives of men and women as so many sacrifices to the eternal, insatiable lust of Nature, and they themselves as the playthings of an implacably ironic Destiny.

But, to George Meredith, Nature, for all her darkness and austerity, is the mother of all joy, of all the sanities and sanctities. The natural love of men and women was to him of all things the sanest and most sacred. Their tragedy is not their subservience to Nature, but their falling from her, their sins against her immanent deity.

His poems sprang from this joy of his genius in

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Nature, its adoration of all the robust and splendid energies of life. Our young critics, more conscientious than ever as they approach this divinest side of him, have suggested that his philosophy spoils his poems as it spoils his novels. They cite "The Reading of Earth" and "The Woods of Westermain." To be sure, in all his great Nature poems, there are aisles and dells of darkness, interminable secret mazes, lost ways of "The Questions" traversing the Enchanted Woods. Yet every way, faithfully followed, leads us into almost intolerable light. Something happens, and we find the Meredithian philosophy (which was, after all, more an instinct than a philosophy) transmuted into the Meredithian mysticism as by fire. His message rings clear :

"Then your spirit will perceive
Fleshly seed of fleshly sins
Where the passions interweave.
How the serpent tangle spins
Of the sense of Earth misprised,
Brainlessly unrecognised,
She being Spirit in her clods,
Footway to the God of Gods."

But besides "The Woods of Westermain" and "The Reading of Earth" Meredith wrote "The Lark Ascending," that continuous, lucid, liquid song of rapture :

"Shrill, irreflective, unrestrained,
Rapt, ringing, on the jet sustained
Without a break, without a fall,
Sweet-silvery, sheer lyrical."

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He wrote "Love in the Valley," and that profoundest, subtlest, most concentrated of human tragedies, "Modern Love." There are lines there that gleam and cut like steel, dividing the intricate web of soul and body. It is the dissection of heart-nerves and brain-cells, a lacerating psychology masquerading in a procession of linked quatrains.

Yet the same genius, so delicately analytic, brought forth with a stupendous and Titanic energy the "Ballads and Poems of Tragic Life." Among these is "The Nuptials of Attila," where the verse rushes downwards in tumult and in torrent like the hosts of the armoured Huns, a poem barbaric, superb, resonant with the clangour of battle. There is "King Harold's Trance," a masterpiece of grim and terrible simplicity. And there is "The Song of Theodolinda," that supreme hymn of the passion of martyrdom, of divine ecstasy in torture, of torture perishing in ecstasy.

The most perfervid passages of Crashaw's Hymn to St. Teresa are cold beside Meredith's fire. And the art of it is transcendent. Every line glows with furnace-heat, and beats in its terrible assonances with the strokes of the hammer :

"This that killed Thee, kissed Thee, Lord !
Touched Thee, and we touch it : dear,
Dark it is ; adored, abhorred,
Vilest, yet most sainted here.
Red of heat, O white of heat,
In it hell and heaven meet.

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“ Brand me, bite me, bitter thing !
Thus He felt, and thus I am
One with Him in suffering,
One with Him in bliss, the Lamb.
Red of heat, O white of heat,
This is bitterness made sweet.

“ Now am I who bear that stamp
Scorched in me, the living sign
Sole on earth—the lighted lamp
Of the dreadful day divine.
White of heat, beat on it fast,
Red of heat, its shape has passed.

“ Kindle me to constant fire,
Lest the nail be but a nail !
Give me wings of great desire,
Lest I look within and fail !
Red of heat, the furnace light,
White of heat, fix on my sight.

“ Never for the chosen peace !
Know, by me tormented know,
Never shall the wrestling cease
Till with our outlasting Foe
Red of heat to white of heat,
Roll we to the Godhead’s feet !
Beat, beat ! White of heat,
Red of heat, beat, beat ! ”

If he had written nothing else, that one poem would be enough to ensure his immortality.

And some of the younger generation, which is so conscientious and so cautious, are wondering whether Meredith will live. Posterity, they think,

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is hardly likely to tolerate what his contemporaries cannot endure. There is much in him, they say, which is intolerable.

Well, there is much in Fielding, in Scott, in Thackeray, which is intolerable. And yet they live. We still read Fielding, in spite of his perpetual digressions, and the essays with which he dislocates his chapters. We read Scott, in spite of his interminable descriptive passages; and Thackeray, in spite of his digressions, and of his mortal tendency to moralise in all places of his narrative. It is only reasonable to suppose that Meredith will be read in spite of everything, even of his obscurity. For nothing can kill the novelist if the novelist is there; and in all Meredith's novels the novelist is supreme. Who, when he thinks of "The Egoist," really remembers anything but the sublime performances of Sir Willoughby Patterne or the ways of Clara Middleton? Who would dream of judging the terrible and poignant tragedy of Richard Feverel by fragments from "The Pilgrim's Scrip"? Who, as he sees Diana keeping her watch by her dead friend, or kneeling by the hearth of Crossways House, will be unchivalrous enough to remember her as a woman who attempted more epigrams than she ever brought to perfection? And there is Emmy under the surgeon's knife, and Sir Lukin raving in his remorse. There is Emilia forsaken and Dahlia betrayed, and they are flesh and blood that no "Idea," no philosophy, can destroy. And flesh and blood they had need be to stand in the presence of their creator. Meredith's personality is so over-

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powering that at times it comes between us and his creations. He has not, as lesser men have had, the habit of detachment. No novelist has it completely, nor can have it. He betrays his own nature more subtly or more inevitably than any other artist, for he handles directly the stuff of life, and we know him by the manner of his handling. It is impossible to read Meredith without seeing him to be before all things clean-souled and courageous and passionately sincere. We divine that there is no greatness and no splendour in his work that had not its match in him. His powers were finely mingled. His intellect was blood-warm and had a heart in it, beating like a pulse of flame, and emotion in him was a spiritual thing, as if the courses of his blood flashed light. To feel, with him, was to see more and not less clearly.

It is not conceivable that he will not live, he who had more life, more virile, fertilising energy, than any writer of the two generations that he saw rise round him and pass away before him. Our own generation will return to him, weary of the lucid excellences of the lesser men, their finished perfection within the limits of the little. He was too great for us. If some of us have lost sight of him, it is not because they have left him behind them with the Victorian era; it is because they have not yet "caught up." He was too swift for us. He has passed us by, and only thus can we conceive of him as passing. He has not yielded up his fire to any one of us. He is on far ahead with his torch, holding high for us the inextinguishable flame.

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BOOKS *that* *compel*

*For him was levere have at his beddes heed
Twenty bokes, clad in blak or reed . . .
Than robes riche, or fithels, or gay sautrye.*

CHAUCER.



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